

Blood Hourglass

Foreword: Sleep and Memories

I knew not how long I slept, nor how many times I had awoken. All I knew was that it was dark all around, the silence of desolation.

Where is this? I remember this was the first question I asked the first time I had awoken. No one answered, so I slept again.

Why did I awaken again? This was the question I asked upon waking up the second time, but again no one answered. I continuously slept and awoke, slept and awoke.

And so I drowsily drifted quickly away. Perhaps it was the fatigue, perhaps it was the hunger. Perhaps it was nothing, but only that the past kept repeating itself in my dreams. Happiness. Pain.

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Prologue

What is loneliness?

It's the silence so profound that you can count your own heart beats from one to ten thousand.

What is loneliness?

It's the lack of a listener. When you want to say something, you can only speak to the ice, cold wall and mirror.

What is loneliness?

It's the terror and fear that seeps deep into the marrow of every single bone.

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Chapter 1: A silent beginning

Light rain drizzled down from the grey skies as if it was springtime, but I was walking down a street that did not belong to this season with my hand crooked in daddy's arm. There weren't that many people, just a few here and there, and the most eye catching was a ragged, rumped, young girl lying on the side of the road. She was barely breathing, and was staring at us with grey eyes that the light had gone out of. There was nothing but the sign of death in her eyes. Daddy stopped and stood in front of the girl, his face full of sorrow as he shook his head without speaking. He led us forward and a grey wind swept some discarded paper and fallen leaves in front of me.

"Daddy, I have something to do, I'll be right back." I hurriedly said as soon as we'd sat down at home.

"The weather isn't looking too good. Make sure you take a jacket with you!" Daddy headed straight into the kitchen as soon as we returned, and began to busy himself with cleaning the vegetables and meat we'd just bought. Daddy had prepared a feast as he'd just gotten his bonus today.

"Okay!" I agreed and walked into the bedroom, taking out a black cloak from the closet. Cloaks are my favorite type of clothing because they protect against the wind and rain. As for black? I think it's the color of night, of silence. A beautiful color.

I pulled on the floor length cloak and silently recited a sentence, undoing the first seal. I left the bedroom and home like the gust of wind.

A black shadow flashed through the gloomy streets and stopped before the young girl who was barely alive. The shadow was a little girl wearing a cloak that was the color of night. She bent down and said to the young girl, "I can give you

unending life, but in return you must pay the price of your soul.” The girl used the last of her strength to wink slightly, and so the little girl brought her face up to the young girl’s neck and revealed a pair of sharp teeth. She bit down, but the young girl’s face was full of happiness. The little girl retracted her teeth after a short while and used her sharp nails to draw a small cut on her arm. The liquid of sin quickly gushed out of the cut and dripped into the young girl’s mouth. Death moved further and further away from her as she swallowed, and this fantastical scene was fully witnessed by a dark figure in the corner. The little girl left after the young girl had recovered, with only a sentence floating back behind her.

“Treasure other people’s lives as if they are your own.” The young girl scrambled up and left, and so the dark figure left as well, leaving only the wind behind. The wind continued to add a bit of color to the nondescript street by stirring up fallen leaves and dust, even though it was only grey.

“Jing’er, hurry down and come eat breakfast, it’s getting late!” Daddy called from downstairs, an occurrence that had become a daily routine over the past two years.

“I know, coming!” I grabbed my bookbag and rushed towards the stairs after combing my hair. To me, having someone call me down to breakfast every morning was the happiest thing. You could say that I waited for this moment with bated breath every morning.

“It’s your favorite deep-fried bread sticks and soy milk today,” Daddy said to me as he perused the newspaper.

“Daddy, why aren’t you eating?” He was staring fixedly at the newspaper.

“There’s an odd article here,” Daddy’s eyes were still fixed on the upper left corner of the paper.

“What’s so weird about it?” I asked as I ate.

“There’s been a murder in a village called Wei,” Daddy relayed.

“Murders happen everywhere, everyday. What’s so special about this one?” I took a large gulp of soy milk in disinterest. The sensation of soy milk smoothly gliding down my throat was a joy indescribable by words.

“But the article says that animals seemed to have drained the victim’s blood.” Daddy said in growing disbelief.

“Did anyone see anything?” I suddenly remembered something.

“No.” Daddy shook his head with resignation.

“Then how do they know it was animals that drained the blood?” I was usually not too interested in topics like this, but this time...

“The report said that some are speculating that an animal’s teeth made the four neat puncture marks found on the victim’s neck.”

“Vampires!” I bit off a piece of bread stick and said decisively.

“Vampires? Have you read too many novels Jing’er? Listen to daddy. There is no such thing as vampires in this world. Their existence is merely a way for people to explain what they can’t explain, and these explanations have no scientific basis at all.” Daddy put on his ‘I’m-a-parent’ face and started lecturing me.

“Oh, I know.” I didn’t talk back because there wasn’t a need to. If the subject was something you disbelieved in from the depths of your heart, then you would not believe no matter how hard someone tried to prove that it was true. Unless you saw it with your own eyes. But in this moment, where on earth would I find the real thing! Not to mention that some things were better off not knowing.

“However, this animal is truly frightening, it’s almost the same as a vampire. I wonder what really happened.” Daddy said heartfully, as he couldn’t imagine what could have happened. But I could. I could clearly see in my mind every scene that had taken place in that village and hear every sound coming from that place.

Night had fallen on a rural village. The laughter of a man and woman enjoying themselves emanated from a lit room. But suddenly, a shrill scream rended the air, and the entire village fell silent. It was a terrifying silence that did not belong to this world, like the silence of walking into a tomb at midnight. But it was the type of silence I liked, it made me feel comfortable, feel safe, feel like I existed.

Villagers sought the source of the scream as they came pouring out of their houses.

“Ah!” It was the scream again, but this time it came from the crowd of villagers. It wasn’t just one scream, but multiple. What had they seen to make

them so terrified? Someone called the police, and the police came to disperse the villagers. The police took away the bodies, sealed the scene, and left silently as if nothing had happened. Everyone had left, leaving behind only the silence that I liked. A pure silence.

“Jing, what are you thinking about?” Xiaoya gave me a light shove, waking me from my daze.

“Nothing,” I answered coldly. I was used to these kinds of dazes, well actually, stillness was the more apt word. Perhaps it was unsuitable for a girl of my age, but Xiaoya was the perfect example of someone the exact opposite of me.

“Okay, nothing then. Let’s go eat lunch. We’re getting KFC today.” She pulled me behind her, running in the direction of the KFC across from school, before I had said anything, like a bat on the hunt, springing towards its prey.

(“Xiaoya, a cute girl in middle school, my classmate and only friend. She’s outgoing, naive, and very innocent. She likes to eat KFC’s Doublicious and often drags me along as well. She also has idols she adores, and is a very normal middle school girl. And one other thing, she’s very gentle. Her gentleness is the most irresistible part about her.)

I grew silent again as we sat in the restaurant, thinking back to the scene that had occurred between classes. The day was dark and gloomy, and day was almost as dark as the night, thanks to the weather. I leaned against the railing at the top of the classroom building and stared off into the distance.

“Luvian,” came a voice from behind me.

“Did you come here just to say my name,” I asked, expressionless.

“You’re still the same, so cold. So cold that it makes me afraid!” She gave a cold laugh as she talked, a laugh that sounded like it had floated out of the mouth of a thousand year old zombie.

“And your laugh is warm?” I asked coldly in return.

“You’re something alright. To think that I was bested by a middle schooler.” She still wore that irritating expression, and hadn’t changed at all from the first time she’d appeared.

“I’m going back to class if there’s nothing else. Middle school isn’t a time for just randomly skipping class. Plus, I have no interest in the cheap laughter of a thousand year old hag.” I turned to leave.

“You! You’re still so penurious. Let’s talk about serious things, you –”

“Jing, what’s up, why are you staring off into space again?” Xiaoya widened her eyes and stared at me closely.

“I’m not staring off into space... aren’t I eating the burger?” I waved the burger in my hand.

“Yeah? But you’ve held it for more than ten minutes and haven’t taken a single bite.” She looked at me in confusion.

“Oh, is that so? Has it been that long?” I bit off a mouthful and chewed as I spoke.

“Look,” she waved her own burger as if to say, look I’m almost done eating.

“What’s up with you today, is something wrong? You keep staring off into space. You have to let me know if there’s anything I can help with, alright?” I nodded involuntarily as I looked at the concerned expression on her face. I guess she’s the only one who can make me act so involuntarily. We went to the library after lunch. She continued to read her unfinished “Pride and Prejudice”, whereas I took a random book and sat in front of a table, reliving the moment between classes again.

“What do you intend to do about the girl?” She asked with no good intentions.

“So you were the rat hiding in the corner!” I said in realization.

“Who are you calling a rat?” She yelled, unable to contain her fury.

“I don’t suppose the cat needs to tell the rat that it’s a rat!” I made a small analogy.

“You,” she spoke again after a moment of silence. “You were her creator, yet didn’t teach her anything!”

“Who allowed you to poke your nose into my business.” I countered unceremoniously.

“Can you lay down your hackles? I’m not poking my nose in your business, just reminding you out of the goodness of my heart.” That disgusting laugh accompanied her words, but there seemed to be a bit of anger mixed in. It would seem that her heart was no longer as calm.

“Who would have thought that a thousand years wouldn’t be enough to teach you how to be a proper noble.” I sighed in cold reflection.

“You! I’m going to go if there’s nothing else.” She hurriedly floated away, as if I had been the one to come looking for a fight. What a kid.

I clapped the dust, from the railing, off my hands and glanced at the grey sky. It looked like it would rain again, and soon. It was then that the bell rang for class, and so I turned and walked back towards the classroom.

When I came back to myself, a boy was sitting across from me, staring at me in a stupor. I ignored him and lowered my head to read the book. That was when I noticed that I was holding a book of lesser known Spanish folklore. I was pretty impressed with my luck. To have grabbed a Spanish novel in an ordinary middle school library! I understood now why the boy was staring at me — he’d discovered that the book in my hand was a little odd, but was too polite to say anything. What an embarrassing incident. I didn’t tell Xiaoya for fear that she would laugh at me. But maybe also because I was afraid she would ask why I was so distracted. Anyways, I didn’t tell her because of certain reasons.

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Chapter 2: Paying a Visit

We spent our lunch time in the library and looked at books that were way out of our depth. I could only sit there in a daze, waiting until Xiaoya told me to leave because the class was about to start.

In the afternoon I had physical education, which I don't like even though my motor functions were well developed. Perhaps it was because every time I ran faster than the other team, I couldn't help but wonder if it was because I had a mysterious power that made me run faster than others. If that's the case, then I'm a cheater. Even if it's not the case, there's simply no way to verify because in this world, I was born a cheater; a cheater who could escape everything, a shameful cheater. Fortunately, the finishing point was not far away and I didn't need to continue thinking about this painful thought. In the end, I still ended up first.

Xiaoya's cheering, the teacher's unavoidable expression, the sound of praise and envy of everyone else – they all fused together and entered my ears and transformed into pain, creating a feeling of suffocation. I wanted to escape, but I was afraid to escape. I was afraid that if I continued escaping, it would become habit. There was a saying that a habit would turn into nature. What should I do if that were to happen, how would I face others, how would I face myself, how would I continue living my life?

I walked slowly towards Xiaoya and she rushed towards me with a pleased look before hugging me while laughing out loudly: "Awesome, you won again, let's go to KFC to celebrate!" The kind of happiness she showed was like I was her greatest pride. However, I couldn't feel happy at all and just slightly nodded my head. Maybe I had already forgotten that feeling called happiness and how to express it.

“For next Monday’s sports festivities, you have to give it your all! You’re my class’s greatest hope.” The PE teacher Yang patted my shoulder while saying.

“I will.” I quietly replied.

“If it’s you, then there won’t be any problems with winning at all.” Sunao came and encouraged me. However, none of them knew. None of them knew that I was a cheater, and that I didn’t deserve their encouragement or envy. It only made me ashamed.

“That goes without saying, she is my best friend! – Lin Jin.” Xiaoya playful added.

Lin Jing, it was the name my daddy gave me. With it, I had this identity, had schoolmates, friends, and everything that I currently possess. However, did it really belong to me? I did not know and even if I spent thousands of years, I might not be able to get an answer.

“Making a posture as if Lin Jin is part of your family....” I didn’t know when Xiaofeng managed to stand behind me and start talking. A shiver erupted from my spine as if a general with outstanding military achievement was standing on a killing field in the center of countless corpses and someone suddenly patted him on the back. It was undoubtedly an extremely scary thing.

“What happened to you, don’t tell me I scared you?” Xiaofeng looked at me with a blank expression and asked me concerned.

“It’s nothing.” Something I often used to say. My schoolmates said it was my mantra. Maybe, I wasn’t too sure myself, but during all these years, I seemed to say those words quite often. Perhaps because these words were easy to say and I could not find anything else to say anymore. I sometimes worry that I might even forget how to talk one day, as it is often said: “Time can make you forget everything.”

“Why are you in a daze again! Recently, you always seem to be staring off into space. Is there something on your mind?” Xiaoya caught me red-handed again.

“Xiaoya is right. I also think you have something on your mind.” Xiaofeng then secretly conspired and whispered in my ear: “Do you have a boyfriend?”

“It’s nothing.” I said those words again.

“What’s nothing, you should at least say if you don’t have anything on your mind!” Xiaofeng looked surprised at me.

“Alright, I don’t and I also don’t have a boyfriend.” I loudly replied.

“Keep your voice down, the teacher is still here!” Xiaofeng didn’t know what to do and covered my mouth, while her eyes kept looking around. Her eyes looked as if they could speak while indicating: “Where’s the teacher, where did the teacher go?”

“It’s alright, just pretend I’m gone.” Yang walked towards her from behind.

“Teacher, how could you say that you’re already gone?! You’re still so young!” The embarrassed Xiaofeng suddenly tried to be sarcastic, to change the topic.

“I must say, you have quite the sharp tongue. No wonder your nickname is Aristotle?” Mr. Yang joked.

“As a teacher, how could you so casually give your students nicknames, wouldn’t it be unfair towards your other students?” Xiaofeng asked and grinned cheekily.

“This was not invented by me. You should ask your classmates!” Replying with a smile, Mr. Yang left, leaving us to do our own activities.

“If you don’t have a boyfriend, then what else could be on your mind?” Xiaofeng turned her head and asked.

“It is you guys who said that I have something on my mind.” I replied.

“Are you saying that there is nothing on your mind?” Xiaofeng asked again.

“There is nothing.” I replied full of confidence.

“If there is nothing, then forget about it. Just pretend that we made a mistake, alright?” Xiaofeng sighed, full of doubts.

Not being able to find another interesting topic, everyone stopped talking and went to do their own stuff. Some played badminton, some hacky sack, and others formed a circle to exchange rumors.

I continued standing there, staring off into space.

I couldn’t remember what else I did that day, and even when I went home,

maybe I had already learned how to forget. Perhaps those small things were just too easily forgettable.

That night, when the moon illuminated the sky, I quietly left my room – It was also something that daddy gave me. I knew very clearly what I wanted to do, but it was not clear yet whether there would be any results. However, I still had to go.

I stood on the roof of our neighbor's house and looked at my daddy's room, where the light was turned off. A grim feeling suddenly emerged from within my heart, but I couldn't say exactly what kind of emotion it was. It only made me feel unpleasant. Was it shame? Maybe it was! When an owl hooted, I suddenly disappeared into the vast darkness.

When I stopped my body, I had already arrived at the entrance of a remote mountain village.

The village was small, but there were a lot of families living inside. The houses were built next to each other, and used this small area of land to its fullest extent. When I walked into the village, I immediately saw the house where the accident happened. The owner died in a bizarre way and the house was closed down, but someone tore the seal and the remaining part was floating in the night wind. It seemed to want to say something, but unfortunately no one could understand it. I went straight towards the house and unexpectedly discovered that the door was unlocked. It was unlatched, how could this be possible? I pushed the door open and suddenly a shadow that was hiding in a corner of the house flashed in front of my eyes. I leisurely walked into the house before closing the door. At the center of the room, there was a square table with four chairs placed around it. I sat down on the northern chair and said coldly: "Come out, I know you're here."

However, even after waiting for some time, she didn't come out. I used an even more indifferent voice and asked: "I suppose you want me to help you come out. I don't want to hurt you, but even if you can't die, you will still feel pain."

"If I come out, can you promise not to hurt me?" A timid female voice asked.

"Are you still talking conditions with me?" I asked sharply "Do you really think

that you still have the qualifications?”

“I ...” Like someone who stopped breathing, the voice was cut off all of the sudden. Even after waiting for some time, she still did not issue any trace of sound. Since I did not have time to wait any longer, I sneered: “Do you think if I wanted to make you disappear, I would still need to talk so much? Thinking about it now, maybe it would be simpler just to make you disappear. ”

“Don’t!” When the voice came out, a woman, wearing a white dress with fear written on her face, stood in front of me. Her expression resembled that of a child that did something wrong and couldn’t help but make people pity her.

“Don’t be so afraid, I just wanted to talk to you.”

“About what?” Before I could finish my sentence, she already interrupted me and asked. However, she immediately noticed her mistake and quietly lowered her head without making another sound.

“I created you, because I did not want you to die in such a sad state. After the transformation, you obtained immortality and normal food could no longer satisfy you, therefore you started to live such a bloodthirsty life. There is no gain without loss, such is the truth of this world. Right now you are a member of the blood family and can choose to join either the Camarilla (Secret party) or the Sabbat (Magic Party). However there is one thing I do hope you can remember: If you are thirsty, you can suck a human’s blood, but please cherish their lives like your own. If you can comply with this one rule, then you will not see me again.” Having said this, I calmed down and waited for her answer, which was also the result I came for.

“I understand, but...” Her voice got fainter and fainter. At the end nothing could be heard anymore.

“But what?” I asked.

“But I want to see you again, although you are a bit scary... but, but I think you’re my only family member. I.. I... besides you, I have no relatives.” She stuttered and her pale, snow-white face shone in a sweet light.

“Soon you’ll find out that in this chaotic and uncertain world, you still have many of your so-called family members. However, not all those family members

will love you, and some relatives might even try to kill you. You have to keep this in your mind.” I advised in a fatherly manner.

“I’ll remember it.” She obediently listened and answered.

“That’s good. I hope we don’t see each other again.” Finishing my sentence, I turned away, preparing to leave and suddenly turned back while adding “It is in your best interest not to quench your thirst in such a crowded place, since there are no lack of hidden demons amongst humans.” Just when my voice faded, I suddenly heard something happening outside the door. It looked like someone discovered us; maybe someone noticed us or maybe saw the torn seal or the unlocked door.

“You leave from the back door. If you see someone, you might not be able to control yourself again. I do not want to get involved with that kind of trouble.” I ordered.

“What about you, what will you do?” She was suddenly concerned about me.

“Me? If you are worried about me, then don’t be. Leave fast!” I ungratefully urged her.

“By the way, what is your name?” Just when she was about to leave, I suddenly called out to her again to ask.

“I don’t have a name!” She replied somewhat sadly.

“Then you will be called Xiaojie!” I even named her.

“Thank you!” She looked at me and gratefully thanked me.

“Alright, you should go now!” I urged again.

Just when she turned and left, a lone figure came out of the house and disappeared in the distance in just a few seconds. Perhaps she was very pitiful, very lonely, but it was her choice, her life. She was required to face it herself; no one could help her and she was helped by no one. I always thought that survival was a person’s own business. Perhaps because of this, I did not go with her. Maybe.

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Chapter 3: One's first meeting and reunion

Perhaps I didn't know myself very well, and perhaps I didn't know the reason why I didn't go with her. It might've been because I got more accustomed to talking and acting like ordinary people now. This may seem ridiculous, but I hope it is the truth.

When you hide in the mountains and close the jungle-like curtains, you would never come into contact with other people. Even if you rotted there, no one would care; you would discover that loneliness had become a way of life. Loneliness would become your shadow. However, when you wanted to pull that curtain away and go out of the mountains in order to join society again, you would quickly find that relationships between people have become more simple and more complex for you at the same time. You would soon understand that there were no more friends and relatives in this world, and even if there were more people in this world, you were just alone – a wandering ghost.

I closed the opened back door and sealed the First Seal. Turning around, I sat on the chair facing the south and blankly looked at the main entrance, while waiting for the arrival of the storm. It was very quiet inside, unusually quiet, but it wasn't the silence that I liked, nor was it part of my silence.

Just when I was thinking about this in my head, the door was pushed open gently, and a tall figure appeared in front of me. Judging from his height and body, he should be a young man. He seemed to have prepared himself beforehand to find someone inside and did not show any hesitations. Very spontaneously, he sat down opposite me, as if we were in a cafe and he was late.

"You should say something!" I coldly said after I immersed myself in this feeling and noticed that he stayed silent after sitting down.

"Should I say 'sorry to keep you waiting'?" He asked with a somewhat playful

tone.

“How long do you still want to keep me waiting?” I asked relentless.

“Three questions, if you answer them, I will send you home.” He calmly said.

“First question?”

“Who are you?”

“Lin Jing!”

“What are you doing here?”

“I’m here to find a person, maybe she’s no longer a person.”

“Did you find her?”

“I found her.”

“Where is she now?”

“This is the fourth question and I don’t need to answer it.” Just when I started to leave, he stopped me and said: “I’ll take you home.”

“No need, I know how to get home and I never promised to let you send me home.” Finishing my sentence, I didn’t turn my head, and walked towards a small, dark mountain road, walking towards the direction of home. He didn’t follow, for whatever reasons; I didn’t intend to find out. This was for the better, because I could unseal the First Seal and quickly go home.

When the moon was at it’s highest point in the dark sky, I was walking alone on a rugged trail. Except for some small animal sounds in the surroundings, it was really quiet. I liked the silence, especially when I was alone at night. It was really enjoyable.

“How lonely of you to go home by yourself!” Suddenly a voice rang out of the woods, followed by laughter.

“Do really think I am human?” I asked while walking.

“Maybe!” She replied after thinking for a moment.

“You are here as well, how can I be lonely?” I walked step by step on the road, while she followed step by step in the woods. We were both walking very quickly.

I wanted to go home and sleep, what about her? Why did she walk so fast?

“You want to send me home?” I asked.

“Don’t be so self-centered, I just want to go home to sleep.” Her words were followed by that annoying, TV drama-like laughter and entered into my ears.

“Do you have a home?” I asked coldly.

“You have home, why can’t I?” I could tell from her tone that she was not really angry and just wanted to quarrel with me.

“Didn’t you say I am a human? Humans, of course, should have home, while you are a noble. Do nobles have a home?” I analyzed precisely.

“Nobles also need a place to sleep!” She argued.

“Isn’t it just a coffin? Just go find a cemetery to place it there. It is inappropriate to put it in a room!” I said, saying these unnatural things with a natural tone.

“You, that’s exactly what people don’t like about you likes. No wonder you don’t have a boyfriend.” She said angrily.

“Vampires are lonely.” I said coldly, with a bit of helplessness and a little sadness.

“That’s why I came looking for you. Ha! Ha! Ha!” She started laughing in this middle of the night on the small mountain road. While listening to this laughter, even if you did not feel fear, there was at least an uncomfortable feeling!

“We are family, Ha! Ha! Ha!” A great deal of emotions emerged, and I surprisingly started laughing. My pace became faster and faster, she was getting further and further away, but I was getting closer to home.

Now that I thought back to the affairs of that night, there were no violent conflicts, nor were there any unbearable farewells. Why, then, does it remain so clear in the recesses of my mind? I don’t even clearly remember the faces of those people. Even I myself cannot say to the point of it being etched into my mind? Perhaps it was like a single leaf, that fell upon the surface of certain still, mirror-like lake; even the slightest of ripples is unforgettable.

After freshening up, I went downstairs. When daddy heard my footsteps, he talked to me from the kitchen: "Jing'er, why are you getting out of bed so early. Today is Saturday, why don't you sleep a little longer?"

"Xiaoya asked me to accompany her to buy clothes today." As always, I drowsily sat in front of the dinner table.

"Then wait a minute, breakfast will be ready soon." Like always, Dad took care of me and woke up early every morning to prepare breakfast for me. I knew he loved me very much, and if I had to leave one day, he would surely be very sad. I did not want to see him sad and didn't even want to imagine it.

I joined daddy for breakfast. I was full of joy while watching him eating so happily. He was very busy at work and even worked on weekends. Usually, he drives me to the bus station, because our home is located at the end of a small path that is quite far away from the bus station.

When I got off the bus at the bus station today, I slowly walked towards the place where I had agreed to meet with Xiaoya. She was already waiting for me, therefore we started to stroll through all the big and small clothing stores. However, even after walking around for a while, she did not even buy a piece of clothing; it was unlike her.

"Do you want to talk to me about something?" I didn't want to walk around aimlessly. It was better to simply ask what was wrong.

"Actually, actually today is my birthday. I would like to invite you to my house for dinner tonight, can I? There's no problem if you can't make it." She asked timidly while bowing her head.

"Sure!" I readily agreed, since I suddenly felt that only when I became a real human, I could live a quiet life with daddy.

"Really? Are you sure?" She raised her head excitedly and gave me a pleasantly surprised look, as if she could not believe what she had just heard.

"Of course." I repeated.

"Awesome! Awesome! Today will be the best birthday ever." She was so overjoyed, that passers around us started to stare at us with puzzled looks. Even after they walked further away, they still kept looking back.

“Then let’s go.” I didn’t want to stand here and become a public display, while I urged her to leave quickly. Just when I wanted to turn around, she suddenly pulled me back and said: “Wait, we have to wait here.”

“Who will come to pick us up? Your father?” I asked.

“No, but you will know soon.” Then she smiled at me. Within her smile, I felt helplessness and sadness, but I didn’t want to say anything. I didn’t want to see this kind of smile ever again, since it didn’t suit Xiaoya’s round, innocent, and pure face. Exactly at that time, a white, very clean car was heading towards us. Instead of a sign plate, there was a very simple but very strange wooden cross that was held together by two small wooden nails. It slowly stopped beside us and when the door opened, a man came out of the car. He was not old and only a bit older than Xiaoya. I guessed that it should be her brother, and just as I expected, Xiaoya shouted towards him.

“Brother, you came just in time!”

“Because I happen to have a habit of wearing a watch.” He said with a smile.

“Brother, this is my best friend, the one I always tell you about – Jing’er.” Their eyes turned towards me.

“Hey, I’m Xiaoya’s older brother.” He walked towards me and gave me a polite handshake.

“Hello.” When I held out my left hand to shake his hand, a sudden strange feeling emerged. I’ve seen him before, who was he and why couldn’t I remember his face? I searched through every corner and depth of my memory, but still nothing.

“Have we met before?” He suddenly asked.

“I think this is the first time.” I replied.

“I feel like we had seen each other before. You give off a familiar vibe.” He looked at me and said.

“Really?” I just answered with a simple word, making it look like I had no interest in this. In fact, I was constantly thinking about it in my mind.

Some say déjà vu exists, and at that time I really had this feeling. How could

you have a kind of familiarity with someone you had clearly never met before? His gestures, his tone of voice while speaking all gave me this feeling. Was this an illusion? No, normal people might have this kind of illusion, but I wouldn't. Also, didn't he have the same feeling? It couldn't be that both of us had that the same kind of illusionary feeling at the same time. This would be too unbelievable, right?

"What are you thinking about? It's already late, let go!" Xiaoya said while pushing me.

"Oh, nothing." I got into the car together with her.

"Brother, what are you doing? Why don't you get into the car and start driving?" Xiaoya, who was sitting next to me, shouted at his brother, who was still staring in space outside.

"By your command My Lady, I'll drive right away." It seemed like he was still completely trapped deep in his thoughts just now.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 4: Meeting Underneath the Sunshine

I made no sound in the car on the way to Xiaoya's house. I hadn't felt the feeling of being bothered by a question in a long time, and only wanted to bury myself singlemindedly into this feeling. The odd thing was, I felt like an extremely happy person in that moment. Happiness? I think I must have been mistaken. I have never known what it is to be happy, simply because happiness would cruelly abandon me the moment I began to understand it. So I've never been acquainted with the feeling, and had no basis for comparison.

A fashionable girl opened the door for me when we got to Xiaoya's place. She looked roughly the same age as Xiaoya's brother, possibly his girlfriend. At least, I really thought so at the time. I thought I would be seeing Xiaoya's parents today, but apart from the girl, who had opened the door for us and our party, there was no one else in the living room. Seeing that I was puzzled, Xiaoya answered my question before I even asked, "My mom and dad actually both passed away in an accident shortly after I was born. My brother has always taken care of me. Do you pity me now?" I saw tears sparkle in Xiaoya's eyes as she spoke.

"You will be happy as long as you don't pity yourself. My parents left me a long, long time ago, but I have a daddy now, and I don't think I'm miserable. So I've always been quite happy." Even I couldn't tell myself if I was speaking the truth or not.

"So you're the same as me!" Xiaoya ran into my embrace and started crying as she hugged me.

"Don't cry Xiaoya. We shouldn't shed tears. That spells the defeat of our body to our heart. We can't let tears prove that there's sadness in our hearts. We have to keep on living, whatever the circumstances, until courage turns into

numbness.” I said as I wiped her tears away.

“But what do you mean? I don’t really understand.” She looked at me in a silly way as she asked.

“You’ll understand when you grow up.”

“But why do you understand it now?” She didn’t give up her line of questioning.

“Because I’m older than you.” I suddenly recalled that I was a bit older than Xiaoya on my legal documents.

“Just by a year!” She didn’t seem to be very convinced or accepting.

“Sometimes, great changes happen in the blink of an eye, not to mention a year.” I sighed with emotion. Indeed, it had only been a matter of one night when I had become an orphan and grown up. Growing up wasn’t a matter of age, but more of whether or not the heart had grown older.

“Alright, let’s stop talking about this. Come have some fruit. Xiaoyu, why are you standing there, dumbly listening in? Are you interested in the conversations of little girls as well?” The girl, who had opened the door, came in with a bowl of fruit.

“Aw, don’t make fun of me, cousin,” we all sat down around the table.

“I’m their cousin, I visit when I have time. My mom, dad, and I don’t feel at ease because Xiaoya is still young, and Xiaoyu is a boy.” She handed an orange to me and added, “My name is Jiang Lan, but if you’re willing to, you can call me sister Lan.

“I’m called Lin Jing, my daddy’s always called me Jing’er.” I responded with my name in return.

“You say you’re called Lin Jing? Your surname is Lin?” Xiaoya’s brother suddenly cried out involuntarily.

“Brother, what’s wrong? Why are you so loud? You scared me.” Xiaoya patted her chest with surprise.

“I’m sorry, I was a bit too loud just now. Are you really called Lin Jing?” He repeated.

I suddenly remembered a person, a person who had wanted to know my name. Could he be that person? I hadn't gotten a clear look at that person's face before, so it was possible. Therefore, I answered another question in cautious trial.

"Yes, I'm called Lin Jing. Lin from the characters for forest, Jing from the characters for quiet. Is something the matter?"

"Nothing's the matter, it's just that I have an online friend who's also called Lin Jing. She says that's her true name, so I suddenly thought that the world was a really small place!" Although he explained it very smoothly, it didn't feel real to me. There couldn't be that much of a coincidence, did he really have an online friend called Lin Jing? I think that no one other than him would know.

"I see." I agreed with him on the surface.

"Xiaoya mentions you often." Her brother suddenly changed the topic.

"Really? What does she say about me?" I asked carelessly.

"She says that you don't like talking to other people, and that you don't like to get close to other people. You always hide away in your own little world, and stare off into space." For some unknown reason, her brother used the word "hide". I think he had some ulterior motive.

"I don't like to talk." I said quietly.

"But you're willing to talk to Xiaoya, isn't that so?" He kept up the pressure.

"That's because it's usually Xiaoya doing the talking herself. She doesn't force me to listen, and doesn't force me to respond." I had no choice but to reply.

"Xiaoya says that you don't seem to like the sun?" He was finally about to reveal his true intentions.

"No, I like the sun a lot. I just don't like standing underneath the sun. I'm afraid of getting tanned." I chose an answer that jived most closely with a girl's logic.

"True, most girl don't like the sun. They're afraid of their skin getting darker with a tan." He stopped there, leaving me perplexed. I wondered who he truly was, and what he was up to.

We then engaged in idle chitchat at the table, talking about random,

unimportant things. Sister Lan brought out the birthday cake she had bought earlier, raising the curtain on the birthday party's festivities.

The four of us, including Xiaoya, lit sixteen brightly-colored birthday candles together, celebrating Xiaoya's birthday.

"Xiaoya, your birthday present!" Sister Lan smiled and brought out a present she had hidden in the TV console.

"Brother, where's yours?" Xiaoya asked evilly as she unwrapped her first present.

"It's the birthday cake!" Her brother responded with all seriousness.

"A tennis uniform! This is so pretty! Thank you cousin!" She smiled so happily, so sweetly, as she held the tennis uniform.

"Yes, it will look beautiful on you." Her brother complimented her as well.

"Brother, don't think you're getting off this easily. Stop drawing it out.. hurry up and show me. I know you got it a long time ago." It would seem that Xiaoya was incredibly astute.

"I knew you wouldn't let me off that easily." He brought out a wrapped box from his pocket as he responded, and handed it over to his sister.

"Thank you, brother!" Xiaoya smiled as she accepted the gift and started to unwrap it. It was a pair of exquisite hair clasps that were shaped rather oddly. They looked a bit like the pastoral staffs that western archbishops would handle, but were also a bit cute.

Her brother picked up the hair clasps, pinned up the hair that had fallen to the front of her face, and said, "This is a pair of holy hair clasps that I've asked a good friend to make. Although they're small, they are quite powerful and can protect you."

"I'm good if I have you to protect me." Xiaoya said naively as she ran her hands lightly over the pair of hair clasps sitting in her hair.

"But I can't always be beside you! For instance, when you go to school or go to sleep, I won't be next to you then." Her brother patted her head.

"Xiaoya, I didn't prepare a present."

“That’s okay, it’s my fault, I didn’t tell you it was my birthday today. Besides, you attending my birthday party is the best present you can give me. You’ve never visited a classmate’s house, so my home is your first time!” Xiaoya cut in before I had a chance to finish, but she seemed to realize that “your first time” wasn’t the most appropriate choice of words, and ducked her head in embarrassment.

“However, I still have something to give you.” I undid the chain around my neck as I spoke. It had always been with me, for I don’t even know how many years now, but it was meaningless to me now. It only represented the past, and I no longer needed its protection. Might as well give it to Xiaoya. Perhaps it could serve as protection, or a memento at the very least.

Everyone was shocked silly when I slowly put the chain onto Xiaoya’s neck, as if I had frightened them. No one made a sound. The party atmosphere, that had been present a second ago, vanished without a trace. I stood in front of Xiaoya, not knowing what to do myself.

“Jing’er, I don’t know if I can call you this.” Her brother said gravely.

“You can.” I responded decisively.

“Jing’er, your gift is too precious. I don’t think we can accept it.”

“But it means nothing to me now. A meaningless item is a worthless item, much less a precious one. However, maybe it will render some assistance to Xiaoya.” I spoke unreservedly and gave my reason.

“Help, Jing, you said it would help me. What do you mean?” Xiaoya was utterly befuddled.

“Yes, what do you mean by this help. Can you go into more detail?” Her brother seemed to be very interested, and asked eagerly with a face full of excitement.

“Judging from your car’s bumper sticker, the present you just gave, and the meaning of that present, I think your job must not be too ordinary. Xiaoya says you’re a detective, would you happen to be one of those spirit detectives often seen in manga?” I cut straight to the chase.

“Jing’er you really know how to crack a joke. I merely started a discussion

group at school that studies legendary creatures, what detective? You can't possibly believe Xiaoya's nonsense!" Although laughter was painted onto his face, his eyes held the distinctive sharp gaze of a detective. It was as if they could see into your heart. Looking into his eyes was like facing a mirror, with my reflection clearly shining back out.

"So what creatures do you discuss?" I actually already knew the answer in my heart, but still had to display some degree of curiosity.

"Have you ever heard of vampires?" He asked probingly.

"The blood family? I've heard of some things." I answered lightly and gave a slight sigh. "It looks like the blood family still hasn't learned how to live peacefully!"

"What do you mean by that?" He stared closely at me, not letting up even a tiny bit.

"Nothing, just wondering why can't the blood family assimilate into this ordinary society!" I felt that I had to watch every sentence, every word I uttered in front of him.

"The chain isn't just to ward off evil, is it!" He obviously didn't want me to change the topic.

"It can't ward off evil. It's useless against everything but the blood family," I explained. I originally wanted to say "it's much more useful than the pair of hair clasps you gave", but didn't want to provoke a deeper line of questioning and so I swallowed that thought.

"You mean against the blood family?" It looked like he wasn't going to get off my case.

"Brother, why are you talking about vampires again. Those things don't exist. You're always going on and on about vampires, and won't stop talking about it even during a rare moment of peace." Xiaoya started complaining off towards the side.

"Xiaoya, the candles have almost gone out. Hurry, make a wish and blow out the candles." Sister Lan suddenly spoke up and diverted the conversation. It was helping me, in a way.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 5: Indistinct Acknowledgement

She blew out the candles, cut the cake, and we all ate a bit of it. Xiaoya was truly happy today. Watching her wear the chain reminded myself of who I'd been many years ago, when I had been so happy, and so simple. I had liked it because it was so pretty, but hadn't thought about what the red color represented.

Sister Lan then prepared a sumptuous dinner for us but what was strange was, her brother kept staring at my every action while I was eating, as if he was observing something. I pretended to know nothing, and only paid attention to eating. I announced that I was going home after dinner, but Xiaoya insisted that her brother take me home.

"My brother will send you home!"

"Sure, no problem," he agreed quite readily.

"That's not necessary. I can go back myself." I've always been alone, for who knew how many years now. I was used to it. I've always believed that you usually aren't in any danger just because you're alone; you'd only be in danger if you wanted to commit suicide.

"No, Jing. It's too dangerous for a girl to walk alone at night!" Xiaoya really did care about me.

"Xiaoya's right, it would be even more dangerous for such a pretty girl like you." Sister Lan also gave her opinion.

"I'm not sure which is more dangerous," I sighed softly.

"What did you say?" Xiaoya's brother hung onto my every word and action, and had heard my even barely audible remark.

"I said all right!" How could one successfully argue against the two of them?

Not to mention her brother, who was constantly monitoring me.

“Then let’s go.” Her brother said, and walked towards the garage. I had no choice but to follow him.

We got into his car. I still chose to sit in the backseat, although no one was in the passenger seat. Sometimes keeping your distance is the wise thing to do. We set off, with me not making a sound. He was also silent, but his silence didn’t last for long; he finally opened his mouth to speak.

“Why did you give Xiaoya such a precious chain? It seemed to be very important to you. Would your father even agree with such an action?”

“Didn’t I already tell you the reason? Besides, my biological parents are long gone,” I said coldly “I’m sorry to bring up painful memories. However, I have a clear understanding that the power of the chain lies not within itself, but with its true master.”

“Its real master died thousands of years ago. ” I knew avoidance was futile when I looked into his eyes.

“Who was it?”

“Vampires,” I didn’t evade.

“You’re joking.” He didn’t really seem to believe it.

“Your call to believe it or not.” I retorted.

“Then why was it on your neck?” He asked.

“Someone gave it to me.”

“Your answer is too general. Are you trying to dodge the question?”

“No, I’m not evading. I just don’t want to recall the past again.”

“Not thinking doesn’t mean you’ll be able to forget it. Sometimes you have to think of it again to truly forget it.”

“My mother gave it to me. The night I became an orphan, I was left with nothing but that chain. I curled into a ball in a corner of the house, and watched the blood covering the floor slowly congeal and darken. I couldn’t help but watch dumbly. It looked like a type of purely colored pigment. It was silent, and

everything in the house gradually began to grow cold, including my body and heart.” I quickly discovered that it wasn’t that difficult to say these words again, as if these matters suddenly had nothing to do with me.

“I had no idea you’d experienced such a terrible thing before, but keeping yourself trapped in the past serves no purpose. Now, you can, and should, completely forget those memories. His eyes were locked on the road ahead, but it gave me the feeling of being seen through. I think it must have been an illusion, because I firmly believed that there was no one in this world who could see right through me. It was quiet for a while, until he suddenly asked, “How much power is in the chain?”

“As long as you wear it, absolutely no noble will dare touch her.” I explained.

Curiously, he asked, “Aren’t you scared without it?”

“I... I have never been afraid. Now, I have a father, a home, a school, some classmates, and some friends. Without the chain, I’m a true female student. There will no longer be any ties between me and that blood family.”

“This is your choice?”

“Yes.”

“To give up eternal life, and choose to die of old age. Is it worth it?”

“The only thing I have given up is the past ”

“Do you care about life and death?”

“I don’t know. No one knows until the moment they face death.”

“That’s true.”

The car had arrived at my driveway as we were talking. It was a dark building, with some white roses planted in the small garden. Vines crawled on the fence as the perfume from flowers filled the air..

He stopped and gallantly opened the door for me. When we were standing in front of my house, he sighed and said “What a beautiful place!”

“You like it?” I asked. “You don’t think it looks like Dracula’s Castle?”

“I’ve never seen his castle, but it does seem similar to the descriptions in

novels.”

“I’ve seen it.”

“What, are you serious?” He seemed incredibly shocked.

“Dracula used to live here,” I responded naturally.

“Here, what about other people?”

“He has disappeared for many years already.”

“Disappeared? You mean dead, but can you still die if you’re a vampire?”

“As long as it is willing, then it’s easier than death for humans. We will forever disappear without a trace left on this world if we merely watch a sunrise.”

“Why do you live here?”

“Do you intend to stand in the doorway and ask all your questions?”

“Do you want to offer me a cup of tea?”

“I will in return for taking me home,” I said as I pushed open the gate and walked towards the main entrance.

“Is the door not locked?” He followed behind me.

“We never lock the door.”

“That’s true. No one would dare come to such a terrifying place. Locking it would be a waste of effort.”

“No, it’s because we couldn’t find a lock to match the door.”

“That’s a strange reason.”

The main entrance was still not locked, and I turned on the dim chandelier in the hall after I walked through the door. Everything in the hall emitted an even more terrifying aura under this kind of light, but I had long since gotten used to this kind of atmosphere.

“Have a seat. I’ll go and make some tea.” I said as I entered the kitchen. He started inspecting the various room furnishings while waiting.

“Find anything of interest?” I put the tea on the table.

"These are all priceless antiques. This house must have been really expensive when you bought it." He also sat down at the table.

"Expensive, if \$100 is expensive." I savored the tea aroma as I spoke.

"\$100? How is that possible? Any one of these random antiques will far exceed that price."

"I'm telling you the truth." I replied quite seriously.

"There must have been a reason."

"The reason is simple, because this is the Dracula's castle and no ordinary person dared to live here."

"Aren't you an ordinary person?"

"Would the owner of that chain. Be. An. Average. Person?"

"I've always thought that someone who could bask in the sun was an ordinary person." He answered confidently.

"If only everyone else thought so." My eyes were filled with a resigned look.

"Come to me if you run into any trouble. I can help you." He seemed to see something in my eyes.

"Because I'm an ordinary person, or because I can bask in the sun?" I stared at him curiously.

"Because you are Xiaoya's friend, because you gave her that chain, because you want to protect her, and also because you want to forget the past and be who you are now." He gave a string of answers, but I knew he had only spoken one sentence. Because I was no longer of the blood family.

"What if I'm a vampire?" I asked coldly.

"But you're not." His answer was quite simple.

"How do you know?" I responded, still expressionless.

"Because I can bask in the sun?" I further asked before he had a chance to respond.

"It felt very strange the first time I saw you. You gave me a mysterious feeling."

No, the proper word is divine. I never thought you were a member of the blood family, there wasn't a trace of vampire characteristics to be found in you. Of course, the next time I saw you, I was even more certain that you weren't a noble because of your ease underneath the sun. That image is still in my mind."

"So it's because I can bask in the sun." I said coldly as I sipped some tea.

"Beep! Beep! Beep! .. " His phone suddenly rang. He shouted urgently into the phone, "I'm in the area, be there soon," and then turned hurriedly to me.

"I'm really sorry, something's come up." He stood up and got ready to leave.

"Have the vampires come out to hunt?" I said coldly. "Good bye, you can see yourself out!" I didn't stand up, nor did I look at him. I continued to taste my tea, closely savoring the bitterness within.

"Okay. See you later." He turned towards the door, but suddenly turned around just as he reached the door and said, "Let's chat more next time."

He rushed out afterwards, and I heard the sounds of the car slowly fade away. I still sat there and tasted the tea, mouthful by mouthful, expressionless, thinking back to what had happened today. I seemed to have said too much today, but it needed to be said. Whatever. It made no difference to me whether I said it or not. I was still myself, drinking tea, with bitterness and silence accompanying me. I was very comfortable and liked this feeling. Silence meant everything was safe, being able to drink tea was to enjoy life.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 6 – The Hunter

In the dark night sky,

The moon hid behind the clouds.

A faint, white light radiated from the clouds

The night seemed to become even darker. Two people stood under a dark, moonlit sky.

“Junyu, you came really quickly!” A man, dressed in casual clothes, greeted Xiaoyu with an amicable demeanor. Next to him stood a man with a solemn expression, who wore a suit. A murderous aura was radiating from his face.

“Xuxing, how did it go?”, Xiaoyu asked while walking toward the man who greeted him.

“It ran away.”, the man with the murderous aura replied.

“Xuqing, what did you say? He ran away? There’s no place to hide in this vicinity.” Xiaoyu’s face suddenly turned serious and a hint of anger could be felt, as if he turned into a general dealing with an emergency military affair.

“In the direction you just came from, did you not see anyone?” Xuxing waited for Xiaoyu’s reply.

“No, I didn’t see anything.”

“I believe there’s a very suspicious place.” Xuqing said coldly.

“Where?” Xiaoyu asked.

“That house.” Xuqing pointed his finger towards direction. Surprised, Xiaoyu slightly opened mouth in shock, but did not say anything for a while.

“Do you mean that house?” Startled, Xiaoyu asked again.

“Yes,” the two brothers replied at the same time.

“Damn! Let’s go!”, Xiaoyu shouted in panic. Immediately, the three of them sprinted to the car and speeded off toward the big castle.

Inside the car someone asked: “Xiaoyu? What’s wrong? Your expression is frightening me!”

“No one should live in that house, right?”

“Yes, I just came from there.” While talking, Xiaoyu continued to increase the speed and the car shot off like an arrow. In the blink of an eye, it disappeared without a trace.

“Impossible. We investigated it before you came. Legends say that long time ago, this house was-”

“Dracula’s Castle.” Xiaoyu blurted out.

“Did you check it?”

“No”

“How do you know then?”, the tone was full of suspicion.

“Someone told me a moment ago. What happened afterwards?” Xiaoyu’s eyes never averted from the road, and it could be said he keep staring in the direction of the house. He seemed afraid that something terrible might have happened.

“The later happenings were very vaguely described in the files and only said that someone paid a small fortune to buy it”. Just when he finished this sentence, the car suddenly stopped and it was parked next to the courtyard in front of the castle’s front door. The three men got out of the car, gently closed the doors, and did not directly enter the castle, but stopped right in front of the gate.

“We absolutely can’t let the girl inside the house get injured.” Xiaoyu touched the gate and it instantly opened. He remembered clearly that he closed it firmly before he left, but now.... When his eagle-like eyes discovered something – he turned his head and said to the other two: “It must be hiding inside.”

“Understood.”, the two replied in unison.

Entering the castle, the trio walked through the lobby illuminated by lights. The lobby door was still open, but Xiaoyu remembered that he did not close it when he left. Therefore believed that nothing might have happened and thinking she might still be sitting at the table drinking tea. However, he did not know that just moments after he left someone else came in.

— (A few moments ago)—

Crack! The front gate opened.

“Daddy came back so early. Perhaps he was able to finish his work ahead of schedule. Coming home earlier was a natural thing and was also perhaps the most unnatural thing is this house. Who would believe that an office worker would be living in such a ancient house?!” That was what I thought in the beginning.

I took the cup he drank from to the kitchen and washed it before putting it away. After getting a new cup for daddy, I poured in some tea and waited for him to come in. I was waiting for him to tell me in a caring manner, “It’s so late, why didn’t you go to sleep? You don’t have to wait for daddy.” However, after waiting for a few moments, he did not come in. Everything was so quiet and this silence had a strange feeling. There were no footsteps, as if the sound a moment ago never happened. Then who opened the door just now. Who just came in?”

“I will find out as soon as he comes in.” I thought to myself while sitting at the table, waiting for his arrival. Sitting there quietly, I listened to the all the movement in the surroundings. However there wasn’t any. Forget about it, I’d better go take a bath! I put down the cup and went straight upstairs. Taking my pajamas, I walked into the bathroom and began to fill the bathtub water. While lying in the bathtub, everything was so quiet. Nothing had happened, as if I was the only one in the house, but I clearly knew that I was not alone.

“Jing’er, where are you?” Xiaoya’s brother’s voice came from downstairs.

“I’m here.” I wore a white dress that reached the floor and slowly walked out of the room. Standing on the second floor’s corridor, I have a complete view of downstairs.

“Are you alright?” He asked nervously.

“Does it look like I’m not alright?” I asked coldly.

“Xiaoyu, who is she? Is she your girlfriend?” A teasing voice asked him, and when he turned around, he saw that Xuxing was grinning at him.

“Don’t spurt nonsense. She is Xiaoya’s classmate.” Xiaoyu hurriedly explained

“Why did you come back? Don’t tell me you chased a noble into my house.” I ignored their laughing and asked coldly.

“Oh god, how do you know that?” Xuxing was startled.

“Xuxing, be quiet.” Xiaoyu stopped him from talking and said: “Jing’er, we discovered that a vampire entered your house.”

“I don’t care, I want to sleep. We’ll talk about it tomorrow.” Just as I wanted to turn around and enter my room.

“I found him. Bern, you have no way to escape anymore.” A voice suddenly shouted. Just when I heard that voice, I saw a shadow spring from behind Xiaoyu and head straight for the stairs. Exactly at that moment, another shadow shot out from the guest room next to me and rushed to where I stood.

“Don’t!” With those two small words, everything stopped. It was as if time froze. The first shadow turned out to be Xuqing, and I see him standing motionless in the middle of the stairway. Behind me stood another shadow, and both Xiaoyu and Xuxing remained frozen in the same place.

“Don’t you dare to move, or I’ll suck her dry. I don’t think you would want to let this beautiful, young lady become a mummy.” I felt an ice-cold hand stroking my neck, gently touching my snow-like skin.

“Alright, we won’t move, but you can’t hurt this lady.” Xiaoyu agreed to his request.

“Take your hands off me.”, I said coldly, I was not even taking this matter seriously.

“Miss, you’re not afraid? You dare to even talk to me in such a tone.” The person behind me wondered.

“Jing’er, you’d better keep quiet. I won’t let him hurt you. “Xiaoyu words indicated that he didn’t want a conflict between me and that vampire. He meant well, but I didn’t appreciate it.

“This is between him and me. Don’t stick your nose in it.” I answer him expressionless.

“Miss, what are you doing? Jun is only interested in your well being.” Xuxing scolded me after not able to bear watching anymore.

“You are a part of the secret party?” I didn’t reply to Xuxing, and instead asked the vampire behind me.

“How do you know?” He seemed to panic a bit and probably didn’t expect to be asked such a question.

“You were hiding outside the window for so long, but still did not come out. You probably did this in order to comply with the first commandment: Don’t intervene with the real world” I coldly gave him the answer he wanted to hear.

“Who are you?”

“I advise you to quickly let go of me. You cannot hurt me.” I didn’t respond to his question.

“Who are you?” He repeated his previous question.

“She is not a human! Hahaha!” Accompanied by this kind of disgusting laughter, a person came out of the room on my right.

“Luvian, I missed you so much that I came to visit you. I didn’t think I would stumble onto such an interesting scene. Hahaha!” She was dressed like a 1960’s courtesan, wearing a purple dress with a slit up to the hips and held a small fan in her hands.

“Did you just come back from a patron, or were you waiting until midnight to join one?” I coldly ridiculed her.

“You, you are so heartless. I came to see you with well-intentions, but you, you treat me like this.” She put on a pitifully expression, as if she was a young madam being mistreated by her lover.

“Alright, treat as if I pity you. I will gift you something. Take the one behind me

to play!" I said without hesitation.

"What do you mean?" The man behind me couldn't bear it any longer.

"Nothing much, Luvian said that she'd give you to me."

"Who are you?" Bern asked again.

"She's not a human." I repeated the same answer as she had used before.

"Then what is she?" Xiaoyu, who was standing also downstairs, seemed to be interested in this matter.

"A thousand year old monster." I said rudely.

"How can there be monsters in this world?" Xuxing didn't seem to believe it.

"I can't help it if you don't believe me. However, you can ask her yourself." I showed a helpless expression.

"Pretty lady, what are you?" Xuxing stupidly asked.

"What do you think?" She didn't seem to take offence and asked Xuxing with a naïve tone.

"....." Xuxing was speechless after hearing this question. He didn't know to reply and stayed quiet.

"Jing'er, stop joking. What exactly is she? Xiaoyu chose to let me answer.

"A vampire." I replied truthfully. Except me and her, everyone downstairs and upstairs was completely stupefied.

"What, she is also a vampire?" Bern, who was standing behind me, spurted out this sentence in surprise after a while.

"Thousand years old?" Xuqing, who was standing silently for so long, at center of the stairway suddenly said those three words, half in doubt and half asking for confirmation.

"Exactly, to be honest I don't remember clearly anymore. Let me calculate for a moment. I should probably be over 1500 years old by now." She proudly mentioned her own age, followed by a bunch of outrageous laughter.

"The older the antiques, the more valuable they are. However women on the

other hand, the older they are, the more unwanted they become.” I probably told her the eternal truth, but I kind of felt happy when quarrelling with her. The reason being, probably in some aspects, she and I were alike.

“You, You!” She was at a loss of words from anger. After calming down, she said “Since you’re in such a bad mood today, I will leave first.” She turned around and left.

“Bern, why are you not following me?!” After walking two steps, she suddenly turned back and shouted.

“Why would I follow you?” Bern angrily asked.

“Didn’t you hear a moment ago? Luvian already gave you to me to play with.” She explained.

“Why should I listen to her?” Bern was so angry, that he wanted to start a fight after finding himself being gifted away by a little girl.

“Do you want to stay and become prey?” She told the real reason why she wanted to take Bern away.

“I have a hostage. They don’t dare to try something.” Bern answered with confidence.

“Do you know the Pupil of Blood?” She asked and abruptly changing the subject.

“I have heard about it. According to legend, the second generation vampires had 13 descendents who created the 13 great clans. Later, they rebelled and exterminated the second generation vampires and it was said that the Pupil of Blood was made of the blood from the second generation vampires.” Byrne said in detail.

“You actually know a lot about it?”

“The Elders have warned us that if we see someone wearing the Blood of Pupil necklace, we must absolutely not offend that person. It is said that there was a curse on that chain and the one wearing it is the proxy of the second generation, watching in their stead, waiting for the ultimate fate of the traitors.” Bern continued and told everything he knew.

“Knowing this, you still dare to take Luvian hostage?”

“What does she have to do with the Pupil of Blood?”

“She is currently the owner of that chain.” She had never talked to seriously before. “What do you want to do to her?”

The moment her voice quieted down, the hand, that was pinching my neck, immediately pulled back. Exactly at that moment, she grabbed Bern in a split second and rushed down the stairs. When the present hunters recovered, they had already disappeared into the vast darkness of night. The moon appeared, but there were always places that its illumination could not reach. Whatever is happening there or whatever happened there, the humans with not know. Maybe, the humans did not want to know either.

“Quickly chase them!” shouted Xuqing from the middle of the stairs as he rushed out the door.

“There is no need. You can’t catch up with her and even if you catch her, can you injure her? You cannot imagine the power of a thousand year old noble.” I stopped them.

“You seem to be helping them.” Xuxing suddenly said.

“I was helping myself. I let her take away Bern, because I don’t want my home to turn into a thousand year old vampire’s battlefield. Preventing you from chasing her is because I don’t want to see Xiaoya heartbroken when her brother has an accident. ”

“Thank you, I know you are acting in our interest. With our current ability, we absolutely cannot match against a thousand year old vampire.” It seemed like Xiaoyu understood my good intentions.

“Alright, you should go back now. You don’t have to shut the door, daddy didn’t come back yet.” I sent them away.

“I want to talk to you, can I?” Xiaoyu had no intentions to leave.

“Tomorrow, I want to sleep now.” I said without even considering it. In fact, I already guessed what he wanted to talk about with me. Without waiting for his response, I turned and went into my bedroom to lie down to sleep.

“Jinyu, who exactly is she?” The empty lobby transmitted Xuxing’s cold voice.

“Let’s go, we’ll talk on the road.” Immediately, I heard a series of footsteps disappearing in the distance and I knew they were gone. I closed my eyes in order to sleep, but surprisingly I was unable to fall asleep for a long time. Everything that happened today flashed before my eyes as scenes flashed in my mind. The me of today and the me of the past were totally different people now. Perhaps, it was because I had already chosen to become a normal girl.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 7 – Between nightmare and reality

“Junyu!” Xuqing shouted from the back seat.

“What’s the matter?” Junyu coyly asked.

“Tell us now about what she is!” Xuxing asked with something that looked like a smile from the other seat.

“A human!” Xiaoyu simply replied.

“Are you sure?” Both of them unanimously and suspiciously asked.

“Of course. When I saw her today, both she and Xiaoya were standing together under the hot sun.” Xiaoyu slowly described some of the facts that he saw. His tone was uncertain, as if even he was doubtful of whether everything he saw was real.

“If she’s not a member of the blood family, then her composure was just too abnormal.” Xuqing raised an objection.

“In that kind of situation, if it was us, we wouldn’t be that calm in that mess, let alone just a girl.” Xuxing continued.

“Maybe she’s already been through something even worse.” Xiaoyu replied with some thought

“What happened? Could it be you know something? Tell us now! You can’t hide it from us~” Xuxing’s interest seemed to increase more and more.

“Thinking about the conversation from this afternoon, I think she witnessed her parents getting killed by a vampire when she was but a child.” Xiaoyu noted after thinking for a while.

“What?! For a child to witness something like this... it must have been horrible.” Xuxing couldn’t help but pity her.

“Then why didn’t the vampire harm her? They usually like innocent and pure bloods the most, right?” Xuxing was always calm and calculated, not blinded by worldly feelings. He wouldn’t leave any doubts in his mind. Though this was his strength, it was his weakness as well.

“That’s because she was wearing that chain.” Xiaoyu explained.

“The Pupil of Blood?” Those words struck like lightning.

“Correct.”

“If she’s not a vampire, then how can she possess that chain?” Xuxing asked and his pity suddenly changed to doubt in his heart.

“She said her mother gave it to her.” Xiaoyu explained while he was a bit confused himself. Could it be that her mother was a vampire? If her mother was a vampire, was she one as well? If she wasn’t a vampire, then her parents shouldn’t be vampires either; then how did her mother get the Pupil of Blood? Only the dead would know the truth, and perhaps this would forever stay a mystery.

“Right now, blind guessing won’t help us. Let’s go look into her past after we get back.” The three of them stood there silently for a while, when Xiaoyu suddenly indicated.

“Yes, I know.” Xuxing readily agreed. All matters of investigation were usually given to Xuxing. He had a special talent in this kind of aspect, and regardless of the difficulty, as long as he tried he could definitely find out everything.

“When you see Xiaoya, please don’t mention anything. I’m afraid that she’ll start to worry.” Xiaoyu changed the topic.

“We understand.” They promised.

“By the way, have you seen the Pupil of Blood before?” Xuqing suddenly asked.

“I have seen it, she gave it to Xiaoya as a birthday gift.”

“What?! As a birthday gift, what a big gift!” Xuxing was extremely surprised.

“Why did she give that chain to Xiaoya?” Like always, Xuqing asked calmly.

Perhaps he didn't know the meaning of excitement or passion.

"She said it was in order to protect Xiaoya. Back then, I didn't believe it, but after hearing it from Bern's mouth, I think what she said was the truth. That chain can indeed protect Xiaoya from the blood family's harm." Xiaoyu replied with determination. After everything that just happened, he was sure that everything Jing'er said was the truth. Jing'er did not need to lie to him, and maybe she couldn't bother to lie to him.

"Are you really going to see her tomorrow?" Xuqing suddenly interrupted his train of thought.

"Yeah, I want to know the details." Xiaoyu said calmly.

"You seem to really care about her?" Xuxing finally asked the question that he considered for a while.

"You think too much nonsense." Xiaoyu denied.

"Is it really nonsense? The moment that you heard that Bern ran into her house and when you saw her being held by it, the anxiousness was written all over your body." Xuxing tried to prove that he wasn't talking nonsense.

"A vampire was holding a girl hostage and perhaps hurt her because of our hunt. Wouldn't it be normal to feel anxiousness?" Xiaoyu wanted to justify that Xuxing was thinking too far.

"However, when we encountered this situation before, you were always calm, yet today you were completely different." Pausing for a moment, he continued, "however, I think how you behaved today was more human.", he smiled.

"Maybe I am seeing her as a sister, just like Xiaoya." Xiaoyu thought for a long time and finally found a reason that was reasonable. However, it's only purpose was to answer a question at a particular time so its reliability or accuracy was definitely in question.

"Really?" Xuxing seemed to have already doubted the validity behind this answer.

"Alright, let's stop brooding over this question. Please tell me what you find as soon as possible." Xiaoyu put an end to the discussion. Xuxing nodded and silence entered the car, as if everyone entered their own world of thoughts. No

one could break into the world of others nor would they want to let others into their own world.

It began to drizzle outside, and although some of them saw it happening outside the car, no one seemed to hear the raindrops clattering on the window. The relentless raindrops were like merciless tears, falling rhythmically on everyone's heart that had loved, creating the tiniest ripple.

During the silence of the night, under the dim moonlight,
A shrill scream pierced the sky.

Hearing this, Xiaoyu rushed over and saw a girl like Jing'er sitting there.
She held something in her hands that looked like a man.

"Jing'er? What are you doing?" Coming closer, Xiaoyu opened his mouth in surprise and started half shouting.

"You don't see? I'm sucking blood." Jing'er who raised her head had her lips stained red with blood, which began to drip down. In her hands lay an apparently unconscious handsome young man that had four small holes on his neck.

"You, how could you... how could you suck blood?" Suppressing his inner fear, Xiaoyu stuttered and asked.

"What is there to fuss about a vampire sucking blood?" Jing asked coldly as she wiped the blood dripping down her mouth.

"But, but you are not a vampire?" Xiaoyu couldn't suppress his feelings any longer and loudly roared.

"Who said that I'm not a vampire?" Jin asked with a harsh tone while releasing the young man who had lost his consciousness and stood up to face Xiaoyu.

"But, but weren't you able to walk into the sunlight?" Xiaoyu mentioned the fact he saw when he picked up Jing'er and Xiaoya that time.

"Why can't vampires walk in the sunlight?" Jing looked at Xiaoyu and her cold stare seemed to stab at every point on him.

"Aren't vampires afraid of the sun? They turn into ashes under the sunlight."

Xiaoyu barely managed to gather his own thoughts and talked about his firm understanding that he believed in for many years.

“But I’m not afraid of it. And I’m a still vampire that has to suck blood. Jing coldly smiled and moved step by step towards Xiaoyu. Her answer turned Xiaoyu’s whole theory upside down.

“Since you are not afraid of the sunlight, then you surely don’t have to suck blood. Please let me help you.” Xiaoyu was still not beaten mentally, and instead seemed calmer and calmer. He didn’t run away and looked at Jing’er. Saying that he wanted to help her in this dark night, where anything could happen, was definitely an extremely foolish decision.

“Do you want to help me? Alright, then help me quench my thirst!” Just when her voice fell, Jing already arrived in front of Xiaoyu. Extending her cold and white hands to hold him, she hugged Xiaoyu’s neck, slowly pulling him closer to her lips. Although Xiaoyu did not expect this outcome, he did not resist and only felt a sudden sharp pain in his neck followed by a fiery burning sensation. Xiaoyu’s eyes gradually became dizzy while his whole body became soft and fell down.

Xiao Yu suddenly opened his eyes wide and unexpectedly found himself lying on his bed. Looking around the room, he found only silence, and the only thing he could hear was his own breathing.

“A dream?” Xiaoyu breathed out and sighed in relief as it turned out to be a dream.

Easing his mind, he sighed again. After waking up, he could not fall asleep again and was constantly thinking the scene in his dream. It was so real and so unreal at the same time. If he did not wake up and find himself lying in his bed, he would not believe that the scene was just a dream. He dreamt of Jing’er, but she was drinking blood.

“It can’t be, it’s can’t be possible.” He denied it over and over again in his mind.

“Dream, it was only a dream.” He constantly repeated to himself in his mind. Tossed and turning in his bed, the more he moved, the less sleepy he got.

Opening the lamp next to his bed, he casually pulled a book from his bedside cabinet and started to open it without even seeing the title.

Exactly at that time, his phone started vibrating near his pillow “zzzzzzzzzz”.

“Hey, what’s up!” Xiaoyu said after answering.

“Xiaoyu, it’s me, Xuxing.” Across the phone came Xuxing’s voice. How could Xiaoyu not recognize it?

“What did you find?” Xiaoyu guessed that for Xuxing to call him at midnight, it must be something important.

“The archives only documented that the widowed Mr. Lin Youcheng adopted an orphan. She was named Lin Jing after the adoption, and goes to middle school at the Southern district. Except for this, I couldn’t find anything else.” Xu Xing said in disappointment.

“Didn’t it mention anything about her past?” Xiaoyu asked.

“Nothing, it didn’t even record that she was once called Luvian, let alone the names of her parents.” Xuxing replied and was getting more and more disappointed. He, who could normally find out anything, was unable to discover anything this time.

“That’s too strange. It’s definitely not easy to get an adoption. We have to investigate first if she has any parents!” Xiaoyu said while wondering.

“Yes, she might have been too young to know, and didn’t know anything. That’s why it was impossible to find anything!” Xiaoyu suddenly thought about it.

“Not possible, she was only adopted two years ago. If she is seventeen years old now, then she was fifteen years old back then. How could she possibly not know about anything? If she didn’t know where they lived, her parents and her name, or in what school she went, then she would be mentally retarded. You could see today that she was not quite normal, right?” The more Xuxing talked, the more confused he got. Perhaps, all of this could only wait until Xiaoyu got an answer tomorrow.

“Ok, I understand. You go rest now. We will talk about it when I come back

tomorrow.” Xiaoyu hung up the phone.

Right now, Xiaoyu was unable to fall asleep. After the dream and Xuxing’s words, the whole ordeal was like a thickening fog. How could he break through these layers of fog? Xiaoyu had already determined that he would have Jing’er tell him everything tomorrow.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 8 – Date and confession

“Aaaaaaa!” I stretched my arms and felt the soft and comfortable bed, and a kind of indescribable feeling entered my heart. Perhaps it was because my bed is so comfortable and I’m very happy to be able to sleep on a bed.

“I slept really late last night, and so it should be late right now... What time is it?” Thinking, I stretched my hand to pick up the bedside alarm clock and looked at it.

“What, half past 2? It’s already past noon?” I couldn’t believe my eyes, how could it be so late? Although it was a Sunday, and I never got up on Sundays to eat breakfast, I also never slept past noon. I quickly rubbed my sleepy eyes, got up from my bed, and put on a long white cloak. Although it was already spring, the early spring weather was still slightly cold. I went to the window and opened the curtain. It was sunny outside and the weather was good. “I wonder how the two guys that escaped last night are; they definitely can’t see such a beautiful bright sky.” I was surprised to suddenly even think of them, as I had nothing to do with them.

I walked into the washroom, washed my hair, and prepared to change my clothes, but on second thought, “Today’s a Sunday and I don’t have to go out. Forget it, I don’t need to change, and no one else is home either.” With that thought I opened the door and walked out of the room.

“Jing’er, you finally got up. Your friends have been waiting for you!” Daddy suddenly shouted from downstairs.

I looked downstairs and saw daddy and Xiaoyu sitting, drinking tea. Seeing Xiaoyu’s suit, it seemed too formal, but I had to admit that that the suit made

him look even more handsome.

“It’s you?” I was stunned and asked in surprise.

“Jing’er, why are you in a daze. Come down fast, he has been waiting for you for almost four hours. ” Daddy anxiously instructed me.

I didn’t answer, but walked slowly, step by step down the spiral case before them.

“Jing’er, don’t tell me you forgot?” Xiaoyu looked at me and smiled and asked.

“I don’t remember making an appointment with you.” I answered straightforwardly.

“Yesterday, didn’t you promise to talk to me today? I would like to ask you out to eat. Can I?” Xiaoyu did not expect that I would answer like that; he paused for a second and asked hesitantly.

“I only said that I can talk to you,” I glanced at my father, “Besides, I have to accompany my father to eat!”

“No need, you guys go have fun! There’s a lot of work in the office today, and I have to go to the office now.” As Daddy finished his words, he got up and left. He really seemed to be in a hurry as he left without looking back at me and Xiaoyu. He seemed to be eager to meet someone.

“Daddy?” My voice was so soft that I could hardly hear myself. Looking at my father leave, I silently turned towards Xiaoyu and sat down.

“Do you want to invite me for a meal or do you want to talk to me?” I held my cloak tighter around my body and asked.

“Can’t we talk while eating?” Xiaoyu replied with a smile.

“Okay. Anyway, no one is cooking for me today.” I replied and rose to leave.

“Then you?” Suddenly, Xiao pulled me back and asked, as he seemed to worry that I would run away.

“Well, I can’t go in my pajamas!” I shook off his hand and said apathetically.

“Oh, but you’re very beautiful even when wearing this dress, like an elegant princess with an extraordinary demeanor.” He also felt that his own action just

now was somewhat rude as he picked up his tea cup, taking a sip and praised with a smile on his face.

“Maybe!” I let out a soft sigh and returned to my room. I didn’t need to wear the school uniform today, so I chose a buff turtleneck sweater, and went back downstairs after I was done wearing my shoes.

“Let’s go!” I said to him and walked straight to the door.

“Jing’er, you don’t look like a teenage girl.” Xiaoyu didn’t stand up as he spoke while staring at my back.

“Is that praise or criticism?” I stopped and turned to look at his eyes.

“They are my sincere remarks.” Xiaoyu actually found the third answer in an instant. Every question had a perfect answer. With a perfect answer, the only imperfect thing of a question would not be easily found.

“I’m hungry, let’s go.” I didn’t react to his answer but only prompted him.

“Well, let’s go.” At this moment, Xiao Yu stood up and followed me out the door. We then got in his white car.

“Do you have a restaurant that you like?” He asked me in the car.

“I think you’ve already selected a place, haven’t you?” I replied.

“There’s this nice restaurant that I always go to.” Xiaoyu simply explained his decision to ease the awkwardness brought by my indifferent attitude.

“Ok. But now it’s almost three in the afternoon, I do not know that there will be any food to eat.” Since he had made preparations, why should I worry about those things. It would be fine to have food to eat.

He then only focused on handling the steering wheel and did not utter a word anymore. Yet, I actually, unexpectedly, began to take note of his appearance. He had neat, short hair, which was pitch black that flashed a green radiance, and a pair of deep and serene eyes which reminded me of my gray past. I don’t know how much time had passed, yet I only knew that there was no longer a feeling of grief in my heart, but rather a slight feeling of bitter frustration and a sense of helplessness.

My mind drifted back to the past——

“Xiaoyou, I, I like you very much,” Under the silver colored moonlight, on a bench at the edge of the forest, a shy boy was confessing to the girl seated beside him.

“So you asked me out here for this, but... “The girl was not impressed by that gentle voice of confession. She paused for a moment, stood up and continued with an apathetic tone, “But we can’t be together. ”

“Why? Why can’t we? You don’t like me?” The boy was agitated, stood up, grasped the girl’s shoulders and asked loudly.

“No, but it’s still not possible.” The girl interrupted his series of questions and answered coldly.

“Then, then why?!” The boy said, increasingly unable to control his own emotions. His voice was getting louder and louder, scaring away the bird that had slept earlier on the tree.

“Because I’m a vampire.” The girl coldly stared into the boy’s eyes. The pair of eyes were so deep and serene, like the mouth of a spring that possessed souls.

“No, no, I don’t believe that vampires exist, and even if they do, it’s not possible for them to see the sun. However, you can, you can, so it’s impossible for you to be a vampire. You’re lying to me. Say, say you are lying to me.” The boy shook the girl crazily as he yelled madly.

“Whether you believe it or not, I am a vampire.” The girl shook away the boy’s hands, and turned without looking back. She ran into the woods at the side and disappeared.

The boy stood there blankly, motionless, like a lost soul. His deep, serene, and spirited eyes turned deathly gray. In his mind, each word she said earlier felt like a knife thrust deep into his heart. The pain felt was indescribable. This pain instantly became a rope, wrapped tightly around his neck while he didn’t resist. Perhaps he already did not have the strength to break it, or perhaps he didn’t want to break free at all, allowing the rope to wrap itself around him tighter and tighter until it became suffocating.

At this point, in his anguish, he did not notice that another shadow came from the other direction of the woods. To be more specific, that was a black long

cloak. It went along with the wind and went step by step closer to him. Yet, he still stood there in a daze, completely unaware of the approaching danger.

A hand as white as snow gently caressed his neck, and he turned around abruptly, but only faced disappointment. Before his eyes was a beautiful but unfamiliar face. It wasn't her. If it was not her, then even a more beautiful appearance wouldn't bring his bright smile and white teeth back, or fill his deep and serene eyes with spirit. He then lowered his head, no longer facing the beautiful face. He just wanted to think of her in his mind, her lovely face, because that is what he wanted in his heart. Yet, that hand refused to let him drop his head as it lifted his chin slowly, wanting him to look directly at the beautiful face. However, his eyes had already been drained lifeless with no trace of vitality.

"A lifeless one." The lips on that beautiful face spit out that sentence.

"If I weren't this thirsty, I would never drink your blood." She said to the boy as she put her lips together on his neck, biting down fiercely.

At this point, the boy's face was shining with light of happiness, in his mind he seemed to see that lovely face moving towards him, smiling at him, saying something to him, he couldn't hear clearly, but he just knew it was happiness. With the loss of the last hint of smile on the boy's face, she gently put him down softly. She knew that he was already dead, and couldn't be drank from anymore.

"I knew the taste wouldn't be good!" She sighed and wiped the trace of blood from her lips, then turned and walked in the other direction. Perhaps, more blood could be found in that direction.

The girl ran for a while, stopped and stood in the dense woods thinking back to the scene, the shy voice said "like" her, but she gave up. Perhaps no one would be willing to speak those words again, maybe she shouldn't have left, or act so coldly. However, she knew that she had done nothing wrong, because she clearly understood that there is a huge gap between them which was impossible to cross. Since there was no chance, so what was the point of trying?

At this moment, a shadow flashed by her side, and disappeared into the darkness ahead.

"That was!" She clearly knew what it was. In the dark, only "vampires"

possessed that kind of strength.

When that word flashed through the mind, her body involuntarily dashed back. At this time her heart felt slightly bitter, a bitter pain that she has never felt before. She was worried, worried that he was hurt, worried that she would never see him, and now this nervousness for him could not be concealed. Now, all she could think of was to get back to his side as fast as possible, regardless of what would happen in the future, as long as she could see that shy smile again when he faced her, and hear him say “I like you”.

“Zhen, what’s wrong with you? What’s wrong with you?” When the girl went back to the bench, he——the guy was already lying on the ground motionlessly. She picked up the guy and shouted incessantly, but when she saw the four small holes in the boy’s neck, she stopped crying. She realized that even if she shouted until her throat broke, he would never open his eyes, smile to her, and tell her that he liked her, and that he wants to be forever with her in the same place again.

The girl held the boy tightly, but the warmth of the boy’s body still body slipped away as time passed. She herself felt colder as the night darkened. With her cold hands, she stroked his short black hair——which flashed green light in the moonlight.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 9: Discussion about the past

“We’re here.” A voice interrupted my reminiscing, and pulled me away from that faraway world. The car had stopped, and Xiaoyu was devoting his full stare towards me.

“Oh.” I responded as I opened the door and got out of the car.

“Vampire Restaurant.” I raised my head to look at the restaurant in front of me. The decorations outside the door were quite unique. The signage was a frayed, wooden board hung by two metal chains red with rust. The words “Vampire Restaurant” were written in blood red on it, appearing particularly creepy.

“Is it scaring you?” Xiaoyu asked when he saw me staring at the sign dumbly.

“No.” I said and walked into that restaurant with the weird name. Xiaoyu followed behind me.

“Miss, I’ve made a reservation. My name is Junyu.” Xiaoyu walked to the hostess stand and spoke to the pretty lady.

“Please follow me.” The lady said as she led us to the table that Xiaoyu had reserved. It was a table in a dark corner of the restaurant, extremely private. Add a few effects from lighting, and the result was that no one else could see clearly into this corner, but we could clearly see the movement of all the guests in the restaurant.

“Miss, sir, what would you like to order?” Another lady asked after pouring tea.

“Lunch.” I answered.

“Two lunches.” Xiaoyu added.

“What would you like to drink?” The lady further asked.

“Just tea will be fine.” I raised the glass of tea from the table in reference.

“Who would have thought they would still be serving at this hour!” I reflected as I took a sip of tea.

“Can you tell me more about the ‘thousand year old monster’?” Xiaoyu suddenly asked.

“She says her name is Lisa and that she’s Thai. She’s never joined any party, has never hurt anyone, and only takes blood from animals.” I delivered all I knew in one breath to spare him asking an endless stream of questions. Take it as my portion of the lunch money.

“How did you make her acquaintance?” It looked like Xiaoyu wasn’t about to let me eat lunch in peace.

“She appears every now and then to irritate me, does this count as an acquaintance?” I asked in return.

“It looks like she rather likes you.” Xiaoyu smiled after taking a sip of his red tea.

“I don’t like girls.” I also took a sip of tea.

“Your cold humor is quite appealing sometimes.” Xiaoyu played with the golden teacup in his hand. In the darkness, his deep eyes appeared to have an even greater depth to them, and was even more mesmerizing.

“Is this a compliment suitable for a 17 year old girl?” I asked in my accustomed cold voice.

“I’ve long said that you don’t seem like a 17 year old girl.” Xiaoyu argued.

“Being unlike something, and not being something, is more than a single word’s difference.” I continued to stare closely at his eyes, those eyes with such a depth to them. I had to admit that I liked eyes with that color. They were so enticing.

“Then can you tell me if being unlike a 17 year old, or not being a 17 year old, is

more appropriate?" He cut straight to the chase. It was at the moment that our lunch arrived. I pretended not to have heard and quietly ate the lunch in front of me. I observed our surroundings as I ate. This was beyond an ordinary restaurant. A few tables, a few chairs, and a few unassuming customers. It wasn't related to vampires in the slightest way. I wondered why the restaurant had been given such a name.

"Is something wrong?" Xiaoyu had possibly noticed the confusion in my heart.

"If anything's wrong, then it's the restaurant's name." I said with a very natural tone, without the customary cold feeling.

"That's the tone most suitable for you, a girl from the season of flowers." I had absolutely not anticipated that Xiaoyu would suddenly say something like this. I didn't know how to respond in the heat of the moment, but we couldn't stay silent forever.

"It looks like you're a regular here, you should know what to order!" I diverted the conversation topic again after thinking for a while.

"If you want to know, then you'll have to have a few drinks. Let me preface this with, you can't have alcohol, but you can have tomato juice." He smiled a slightly evil smirk at me.

"Why do I have to drink tomato juice? Because it's red?" I asked discontentedly.

"You don't like it?" He seemed to be probing for something.

"If we're talking about juice, then I prefer orange juice." I said coldly, but ripples slowly moved through the surface of the lake in my heart, one that had been as calm as a mirror previously.

"Then what about color?" He put down the cutlery in his hands and gazed at me severely.

"Silver." I put a small piece of beef into my mouth and chewed slowly.

"Then I'll treat you to orange juice later." He suddenly became very happy with a smile that would put others at ease. Maybe it was because he had received an answer he wanted. We dined amidst that comfortable smile as if everything was

peaceful, a type of calm that no one wanted to disturb for any reason whatsoever.

We were eating lunch not at lunch time. Good thing we were hidden in the dark, although perhaps “hidden” wasn’t the best word for it, but we looked a bit odd in the eyes of others. All the other guests in the restaurant were either drinking tea or coffee, or snacking on exquisite desserts. This was the thing to do at this hour, and not to relish lunch like we were doing.

We finally finished eating. For the record, he finished first, and I swallowed the last few bites under his unblinking adoration.

“Alright, I’m full and I think you’ve seen enough. Let’s go!” I dabbed at my lips with the napkin and indicated my desire to leave.

“To be honest, I haven’t seen enough. But let’s go, where to?” His original big brother image completely vanished after these words.

“I want to know why this restaurant is called by this name.” I merely sighed lightly in my heart, and replying serenely while maintaining an emotionless facade.

“Then why leave?” He appeared completely perplexed.

“Will we learn why if we just stay in this restaurant?” I stared into his eyes as I asked. I liked to look into the other’s eyes when I talked to them. Past experience has taught me to search for answers in people’s eyes, and not in their words.

“When this restaurant enters the dark world, that’s when it becomes a real restaurant for vampires.” It looked like Xiaoyu no longer wanted to continue hiding the truth.

“Will there really be vampires?” I was more interested in this.

“Perhaps! But we’re not really sure who is and who isn’t.” Xiaoyu responded as he glanced at his watch.

“Isn’t it a bit dark outside already? When will it start operating?” I was very aware that Xiaoyu had just wanted to check to see if it was the Vampire Restaurant’s operation hours yet when he’d looked at his watch.

“Not yet, it’s only 5:50 pm. It’s probably dark due to bad weather. It usually

doesn't start until 6:30 pm." Xiaoyu said with a face full of resignation. "Perhaps we wouldn't have to wait if you'd slept until 3 pm."

"Then you guys are to blame for not causing enough fuss last night." I said coldly, in the tone that I used most often.

"I think it's because your friend Lisa was too strong." Xiaoyu refused to back down.

"First, Lisa isn't my friend. Second, that vampire called Bern was too weak." I argued back.

"Oh right, you haven't told me yet how you two met." Xiaoyu suddenly thought of this question.

"Who!" I pretended not to know who he meant by "you two" as I took a sip of tea.

"Why, you and Lisa of course." Xiaoyu stared closely at me without letting up for a second.

"I don't remember either." I didn't wish to answer this question.

"You're evading again." It looked like Xiaoyu really didn't intend to let me off the hook that easily today.

"No, just that it's in the past and I've forgotten already." I ignored him and continued to drink tea.

"Have you really forgotten, and really are unable to recall it?" Xiaoyu asked ceaselessly.

"I've really forgotten. Since I've forgotten, there's no need to dwell on it." I said calmly, not a trace of emotion in my tone.

"Then I have another question to ask you, is that alright?" Xiaoyu knew that there was no point in asking further and so changed the topic.

"If I haven't forgotten." I said coldly.

"What were you so lost in thought about in the car? I looked at you a few times and you didn't even realize." Xiaoyu interrogated me with his deep, deep eyes.

“....” I didn’t respond, perhaps for a second, I didn’t know how to begin.

“You’ve forgotten?” Xiaoyu asked upon seeing that I remained silent.

“No just that I don’t know where to begin.” I could not escape when faced with those deep, soulful depths.

“It’s just an interlude in my past, do you really want to hear?” I asked.

“I do, will you tell me?” Xiaoyu’s face was full of astonishment, such was the satisfaction humans received from having their curiosity satisfied.

“It’s actually quite simple. I had a friend once, he was killed by vampires the night he told me he liked me.” I knew the past was already past, and only through talking about it would I truly be able to let go. However, I didn’t wish to talk about that matter in great detail. After all, it was an unsavory and woeful memory.

“You still like him?” Instead of comforting me, Xiaoyu asked me the question I least wished to answer, because its answer touched the most fragile part of my heart. It would shatter at the slightest touch, and be in pain when shattered, a type of pain that was indescribable with words.

“I don’t know, but I didn’t admit it then, and now I can’t forget it!” I took another sip of tea and avoided Xiaoyu’s eyes.

“Because of love?” Xiaoyu seemed to have sworn an oath to never rest until he had fully gotten to the bottom of everything.

“Perhaps because of guilt. He was severely affected by me leaving him, and met a vampire in the end.” Although I knew this wasn’t my fault, I had been the only one who could save him, and so I should have saved him. He was someone I had to save, but I hadn’t. I left. I left him behind. I left behind a person who loved me deeply. I let him to face the vampire alone, face death, face the fear of never seeing me again. I was indeed filled with remorse, but wasn’t sure that a hint of love hadn’t been mixed in. In this dog eat dog society, why would you feel remorse or find it hard to forget someone if not for love!

“Why did you reject him? Did you not love him?” Why wouldn’t Xiaoyu leave that little bit of my secrets alone?

Beep beep beep! Xiaoyu's phone suddenly rang urgently before I had a chance to respond.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 10 - Warmth

“Ah,” Bern sat up and shook his dizzy head, yet shaking seemed to have no effect. He started patting his own head heavily with his hands while asking, “What’s wrong with me? Where is this place?”

“A room.” The black shadow that stood on the windowsill with its back facing Bern answered.

“You! It’s you!” At this moment, Bern finally regained his senses. The things that had happened earlier to him flashed through his mind and he yelled in agitation.

“Who am I? Do you know? The black shadow did not turn around nor move a step. It only questioned with a laughing and mocking tone.

“A thousand year old monster,” As five words flashed across Bern’s mind, he blurted out the words. As soon as he had spoken, he realized that it was inappropriate and hastily corrected himself, “No, no. It’s senior.”

“Ha! Ha! Ha! Senior! A very appropriate form of address.” That black shadow turned around and approached Bern slowly, as the terrifying laughs also drew closer. The laughs crashed against his ears and affected his heart until it no longer had the lively undulation.

“Thank, thank you for saving me! Bern stammered as he stared at that shadow which was drawing closer and closer. Yet, his body began to back away involuntarily, until he hit the corner of the wall.

“So how do you plan to repay me?” Seeing that Bern had curled up in the corner, trembling slightly, the black shadow stopped and did not move any closer.

“What...what do you want?” Bern asked dumbly as he gazed into the flashing green eyes.

“You!” The terrifying voice answered.

“Want... want me.... want me for what?” Bern’s voice began to quiver. At first, he was only slightly afraid of her, but now it has totally overcome by fear. Facing a one thousand, five hundred years old vampire was something he had never experienced before. Bern was an Ancilla. In the secret party, he had obeyed the rules for more than sixty years. Although he was rather young among the blood family, he did possess considerable ability. Thus, he caught the attention of the Elders. Sometimes, he could even chat a few words with the Elders. However, among the Elders that he knew, the oldest was only one thousand years old. Yet, the one that was facing him and talking to him was five hundred years older than that oldest Elder. This is a number that he still couldn’t even imagine now. Feeling fear because of ignorance was reasonable.

“Play with me.” That sound answered, along with a long string of “Hahaha” laughter.

“Play.. play what?” Bern froze for a moment. He absolutely did not expect such a request. A one thousand, five hundred years old vampire actually wanted him to play with her. What fun is there between the two of them? He seriously couldn’t figure it out.

“I still don’t know now, but you can make some suggestions. As long as it’s fun then it will be fine.” She said with a smile. “By the way, just call me Lisa.” As she was still saying, she drew closer to Bern while stretching out her hand, seeming to be about to help him up.

“What....what do you want?” Bern totally did not comprehend her words and actions, as he screamed in shock.

“How long do you plan to stay here? From last night until now, it has been a day and a night. You aren’t bored of it, but I can’t stand it anymore.” With this, she pulled Bern up from the ground abruptly without even giving him a second of consideration.

“.....” Bern opened his mouth but not a sound could be uttered. He had no idea whether it was because of the fear or because there was not enough

time. There he stood dumbly, staring at Lisa silently.

“What’s wrong? Am I really that terrifying?” Lisa laughed and asked. However, the laughter at this moment was no longer that terrifying. It was as if she was talking to a little kid, with a tone that seemed gentle, calm and amiable.

“No, not at all.” Bern answered. The weird thing was, now, warmth was suddenly felt in his heart. The dozen years of snow like coldness vanished into thin air along with that question. It was like returning to mommy’s embrace, feeling warm and comfy.

“Hey. Are you alright?” Seeing that Bern was stunned with no reactions, Lisa hastily asked.

“Ye...Yes” Bern lowered his head. He was grinning. It had been a long time since he had smiled. Ever since his only family—his Mom, left him, he had stopped smiling. It was not that he didn’t want to smile, but that he couldn’t smile anymore. But now, Lisa had retrieved his smile for him. She helped him retrieve warmth and the feeling of having a family.

“Then let’s go; I am thirsty.” Lisa said while pulling Bern out of that dark room. Outside was also as dark as the room, but all the darkness that they saw with their eyes was still beautiful.

Bern didn’t resist, but allowed Lisa to pull him out. He had no idea where they would be going and he didn’t want to know. He only knew that he wanted to be with Lisa. He didn’t want to leave that warmth which only family members had. Affection is a very peculiar thing. Whether it’s between humans or between vampires, as long as it exist, it will possess extremely strong power. For them now, the affection between the two of them had made Lisa not frightening anymore. Instead, Lisa had become very amiable, like a family member. Therefore, he has decided that no matter what happens, he will never leave her. He will stay by her side, play with her, laugh with her, and retrieve the things that they have lost.

And so, under that faint moonlight, the two dark shadows slowly disappeared into the dusk.

Within a very ordinary house in the city, another scene of warmness was being performed.

“The sky has darkened already. Why isn’t brother back?” In the living room, Xiaoya was worrying while eating chips.

“Maybe there’s work!” Sister Lan answered while sipping her tea.

“But isn’t today his day off?” Xiaoya asked again with a puzzled expression on her face.

“Right. He usually accompanies you home on Sunday!” Sister Lan was slightly confused too. She then took a sip of the tea again. The tea tasted a little bitter but when you were used to it, you would think it had a rather good fragrance.

“Let’s give brother a call!” Xiaoya put down the chips in her hand and grabbed the phone. Seeing that Sister Lan who sat at the side was leaning over, she placed the phone in her hand down and pressed the handsfree button.

“Hi. Hello, I am Jun Yu.” On the other side came Xiaoyu’s deep and attractive voice.

“Brother, it’s me. I am Xiaoya.” A sunny voice spoke.

“Oh. Xiaoya, it’s you. Did something happen that made you call me specially?” Xiaoyu hastily asked. Normally, Xiaoya rarely calls her brother, unless a big problem which she herself couldn’t solve happened.

“No. I just saw that you still haven’t returned home since you left this morning. Cousin and I are a little worried.” Xiaoya explained. This is family. No matter where you are, you won’t feel lonely as long as your family is there. Because you know that in some place, your family is caring about you and thinking about you.

“Oh. I see. I am alright. Just invited a friend out for food.” Xiaoyu answered with a natural tone, while warmth flowed incessantly in his heart. It was good to have family!

“Eating until now?” Sister Lan suddenly interrupted.

“It’s not easy to invite people out for food. I waited for her to wake up until two o’clock at noon. Xiaoyu sighed emotionally.

“What! Two o’clock at noon! That means you waited a few hours! What friend is this? You were willing to wait that long, don’t tell me it’s a girlfriend!” Sister Lan had watch the two siblings grew up since she was young and she had also

been taking care of them. Therefore, she knew Xiaoyu's character very well. Since young, many girls have had a crush on him, yet he was not attracted to any one of them. This time, could it really be.....

"Cousin, don't say nonsense. I don't have any girlfriend. However, I do have a friend that is slightly special." Xiaoyu explained again and again.

"Alright, I'm just kidding. I won't disturb you two. Come home earlier this time, and tell me what special friend that is when you are back." Although she said so, but Sister Lan didn't really believe that it was merely a special friend!

"Okay, I got it. Goodbye then." Xiaoyu said and turned off his phone. As Xiaoya heard the beeping sound from the other side, she could only hang up the phone.

"Cousin, I thought that brother became slightly weird since he came back yesterday." Xiaoya picked up the bag of chips she placed down just now and started eating.

"Why?" Sister Lan questioned with a dubious face.

"Yesterday, he came back around ten pm after sending Jing home. Although I have never gone to Jing's house before, I am very clear that it only takes a half an hour drive from my house to her house. Yet, it took brother three to four hours. Don't you think it's weird?" Xiaoya played with the bag of chips in her hand and elaborated like a detective peeling off the layers of confusion slowly.

"He might have stayed at Jing'er's house for a while." Sister Lan answered skeptically.

"I don't think that's possible. Jing is a person that doesn't like to be close to people, nor a person that likes people to be close. I can hardly imagine brother being able to chat a few hours with Jing." Xiaoya firmly believed that she knew Jing very well, since Jing was only willing to speak to her alone.

"Speaking of Jing'er, I don't think she's a normal girl. She has that sharp expression in her eyes that look down upon everything, and a philosopher's peculiar view that makes one deep in thought. Also, her way of talking is noble, elegant, and apathetic, totally like a young lady who has experienced a lot." Sister Lan recalled Jing'er's manner and demeanor of speaking, and concluded her impression of Jing'er elaborately.

“Cousin’s eyes are sharp indeed. I also felt that Jing was slightly weird, but I just didn’t know how to describe it.” With an admiring expression, Xiaoya gestured a thumbs-up at Sister Lan with her thumb which was covered with the smell of the chips.

“Kiddo, don’t talk glibly.” Sister Lan chided while laughing.

“But what kind of person is Jing?” Xiaoya held up the jewel that gave off a blood-color glow on her neck and asked emotionally.

“How would I know. However, I think someone might know something about this.” Sister Lan said meditatively.

“Who?” Xiaoya asked in surprise.

“Xiaoyu.” Sister Lan stared into Xiaoya’s eyes, seeming to be waiting for a corresponding reply.

“My brother! How is it possible for my brother to know clearer than me!” Xiaoya just couldn’t believe it.

“I also don’t know why, but I just have this feeling. However, just wait for Xiaoyu to return and then we will know after we ask him.” With this, Sister Lan walked into the kitchen. She still had to prepare dinner!

“Impossible. Absolutely impossible.” Xiaoya thought as she sat there alone. “Brother has never met Jing. Even if Brother and Jing have chatted for a few hours after he has sent her home, it would be impossible for him to understand what kind of girl Jing is. Because her words never allowed others to comprehend every meaning clearly, thus, it would be impossible to have even a hint of her past. I spoke to her the most in school, and I am the one that is the closest to her. If I don’t know, how would brother know? Cousin must have guessed wrong. When Brother returns, I must have him tell cousin that she has guessed wrong.” Xiaoya made up her mind, and ate the last few chips in her hand. She threw the empty bag of chips into the dustbin easily, and turned on the television to watch the entertainment shows. Soon, she burst out into a guffaw, “Hahaha.” The doubt just now was hurled beyond the highest heavens. Maybe this is youth; this is the carefree flower age.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 11 – Food

“Miss, are you alone?” A man full with the flavour of gentlemen asked me. I lifted head and looked gave him a glance and noticed that he didn’t look bad. With almost perfect facial features put on his face, it was excessively impeccable even from my point of view.

“Didn’t you notice?” I coldly replied. Please don’t misunderstand; I am not attempting to flirt with him. I am really currently really alone, that was an indisputable fact. Why just to avoid some unknown trouble offend someone in front of you! Furthermore, he seemed a bit...

“Thank you!” He sat right across from me. Xiaoyu and I was sitting on a table meant for four people, but I wasn’t too worried about what Xiaoyu will do after he comes back that was his business. So I drank tea and pretended that I was alone while not uttering a single word.

“Are you waiting for it to open?” He looked at me and silently asked.

“No, I’m already inside and waiting for the other guests to tell me why this restaurant has this name.” I said coldly.

“That’s because there are vampires here in the evening.” He said casually but it gave people a sense of doubt.

“You can tell the difference between who is and who isn’t?” I asked.

“Even without looking, I know who is and who isn’t.” He answered simply.

“How many?” In fact, I could hardly imagine a scene with a large group of vampires drinking and chatting together.

“That, I don’t know, but in a minute you can see for yourself.” He said that sincerely, not intending to joke.

“Can I ask, how can you confirm that?” I asked for his method and furthermore it was in a respectful tone. It didn’t matter if what he said earlier was a sincere offer or just making fun of me.

“In order to hide their identity, they won’t show any difference. However they will deliberately approach their favorite food, so that they could bring them back when they leave to slowly enjoy them later. “Although he used third person, he seemed like praising his own virtue with high spirit.

“Why not enjoy it here?”, I was a bit puzzled. Although secret party vampires must comply with this principle of not intervening with the real world, but in the dark they don’t have to hold back, let alone the magic party.

“The reason being; this restaurant does not allow vampires to drink blood here.” He said a little helpless.

“But vampires really abide the rule?” I was a bit puzzled.

“They are afraid not to abide.” Talking about it, he suddenly remembered to ask the waiter to a cup of red wine and continued,” the owner of this restaurant is a vampire who is 1800 years old and who fails to abide this principle will be punished. ”

“Have you seen the boss before?” I’m rarely interested in a person.

“I have, he normally comes here once every year to this restaurant. Right, today is the day. It looks like you’re lucky. Wait a moment and you will be able to see him.” He seemed to be talking about an immortal-like person with a tone of endless worship and envy.

“What a pity, it’s just a noble who is less than two thousand years old!” I was a little disappointed, it really was disappointing. My heartfelt the disappointment, it was something I also hadn’t felt for a long time. Even though it was a bit strange, I was sure it was disappointment.

“Less than two thousand years old? Ha! Ha! Ha! Even a 1000 year old vampire is very difficult to find and you are still not satisfied with a vampire who almost reached 2000 years! Could it be that you met a 2000 years of noble?” He felt as if I was from a fantasy.

“Of course.”, I couldn’t help but blurt it out in order to stop his laughter.

“Have you really seen one?” He stopped laughing and seriously asked.

“Never met one, I just meant that they must exist.” I know that I let it slip and immediately explained, “I just that, since vampires don’t die, certainly there should be some vampires that are over 2000 years old.”

“That isn’t necessarily true. Eternal life comes with eternal sorrow. Everyone could get at a point where they couldn’t endure it anymore and choose to end this suffering.” He sighed, showing a deep sadness.

“Would you?” I suddenly thought of this problem.

“Me, why do you ask me, do you think that I am a vampire?” He asked in surprise.

“Aren’t you?” I asked.

“. ” He didn’t know how to answer, so he kept silent.

“How did you find out?” After a while, he woke up from his silence and asked.

“Didn’t you just tell me that they would deliberately approach their favorite food?” I didn’t show a trace of unease and surprise.

“You mean, you’re my favorite food?” He slowly said after talking a slip.

“That, only you would know?” I sipped some tea, not intending to directly answer his question.

“If you are, what will you do next?” He smiled at me and asked.

“Against a little noble like you who only has a few hundred years, I don’t need take it seriously.” I said coldly.

“You, you are a thousand year old vampire?” He became somewhat excessively surprised that even his voice became a little distorted.

“I know a vampire who is more than a thousand and five hundred years old.” I was very calm and didn’t take our conversation nor him seriously. Frankly it wasn’t necessary to take it seriously.

“He didn’t touch you.” He was even more surprised.

“She just comes to talk to me from time to time, every annoying.” I said casually. Hearing what I said, he was so confused that he didn’t know what to

say next.

“Jing’er, this is?” While we were keeping our silent, Xiaoyu came back from the outside after finished his call.

“A vampire.” I was outspoken.

“You’re really called Jing’er, your name is really fitting! And he is?” Asked the vampire while laughing.

(TL: Jing means calm and silent in Chinese.)

“A hunter.” I didn’t hide anything.

“It’s an interesting introduction! My name is Sinmo. What do I call you?” The vampire smiled and held out his right hand to Xiaoyu. It was an interesting scene seeing a vampire and a hunter introducing to each other and shaking hands, which was rarely happening.

“My name is Junyu. Hello!” Xiaoyu also stretched out his right hand the handshake portrayed that vampires and hunters were not real natural enemies. Someday, at a special time and in a special place they would no longer be natural enemies and that they could shake hands, laugh and chat.

Suddenly, I felt that in this world real natural enemies may not exist. The so-called natural enemies may be only be relative for a period of time, created by an environment.

“Jing’er, don’t crack this kind of joke in the future, you will scare people!” Xiaoyu sat down beside me after lecturing me.

“Do you think there’s temperature on his hand?” I asked coldly.

“You are not joking?” Xiaoyu experienced the residual cold on his hands and quickly asked.

“It’s true, I can prove it.” Sinmo replied for me.

“Why are you together with Jing’er? Could it be that you knew each other before?” Xiaoyu seemed to suspect something.

“If we knew each other before, then you wouldn’t have had the chance to meet me.” I stared at Sinmo’s eyes and answered.

“Why?” Xiaoyu didn’t understand.

“Because she is my favorite and the most ideal food.” Sinmo was always willing to help others by sweeping away doubts.

“You, you think with me here I would let you hurt her?” Xiaoyu tensed up and fiercely yelled at Sinmo.

“I can’t hurt her, but not because of you!” Sinmo was still calm and answered gallantly.

“Is it because of this shop?” Xiaoyu saw that he wouldn’t harm and calmed down.

“It’s because of herself.” Sinmo smiled and looked at me while saying.

“Me? Do I have such a high ability?” I interrupted them.

“In fact, I do not know exactly who you are. However, I know if human beings were called a short-lived species then you definitely are not an ordinary short-lived specie. Your eyes tell me that you don’t care about the worldly matters, including human life which made you become like us and just as powerful.” Like a psychologist, Sinmo gave a careful analysis of my personality with rights and wrongs, but only I know.

“In just a few minutes, you have done such a thorough analysis on me. Could it be that you have a natural dark gift in this aspect?” I suddenly remembered of “natural dark gift”, it was floating in the depths of my memory.

“What is the natural dark gift?” Xiaoyu, who seemed to not knowing about the meaning of this word, asked puzzled.

“So you even know about the natural dark gift. You really aren’t a simple girl. Xiaoyu. I think I’m perhaps a few hundred years older than and it should be more appropriate to call you Xiaoyu. Maybe you are too young, otherwise as a hunter how couldn’t you even know this?” Sinmo was using the tone of an older generation while talking. “Natural dark gift is an ability that each noble has, but each noble has a different kind. The moment when you become a noble, you will receive some kind of magical ability that no one can predict in advance what kind of ability you will get. There was also no other way to change it to a different kind of ability afterwards, therefore it is called a natural gift and there shouldn’t

be a need to explain the word dark.”

“Why do you look like you are teaching a student?” I said what I thought.

“Jing’er, what are you talking about? Who did you call a student?” Xiaoyu asked me grumpily.

“You, are there any other person here who doesn’t know what ‘natural dark gift’ means!” I sighed.

“Alright, see it as my loss.” Xiaoyu was powerless against me and could only agree with me. “However, Jing’er how were you able to find a vampire when it is your first time here. I have been coming here for so long and I had never seen one.” Xiaoyu said in doubt.

“That you have to ask your teacher. It was him who found me.” I gave him a clear hint.

“That’s right, I was looking for her but I didn’t tell her that I was a noble!” Sinmo pushed the ball towards me and it seemed like I couldn’t escape anymore.

“True, he gave me too many details about him being a noble. Except a noble who else would know so much in such details?” I made a resigned look.

“How can you be sure that everything I said was true? Could be that you were also a noble?” Sinmo asked sharply.

“No, Jing’er can’t be a noble.”, Xiaoyu was even more nervous than me.

“Why?” Sinmo took advantage of the opportunity to ask.

“She has a home, classmates and most importantly she can bathe in the sun.” Xiaoyu replied full of certainty.

“Can she really bath in the sun?” Sinmo wasn’t willing to believe.

“I can assure you that we came here at noon. She was covered in brilliant sunlight while walking into the restaurant.” Xiaoyu convinced himself about everything he saw.

“Perhaps she is a vampire living under the sun! Ha! Ha! Ha! I am joking.” Sinmo said with a smile. Maybe he was joking, but I felt my heart twitch.

“There are vampires who are living under the sun. For example those corrupt

officials and those who don't work to hold all the wealth." Xiao Yu proposed a new point of view.

"Jing'er is not that kind of person." Xiaoyu went on to explain.

"Of course, Jing'er is a bit unusual; perhaps the better term would be a little extraordinary." Sinmo said to himself, but his voice was loud enough for people like us who were present to hear.

"It's just because your experiences were too meagre, too common. That's why you would describe me like that." I actually felt a little ashamed after listening to their words of praise. Maybe I have a past that was too long with too many painful memories. Some people say that the more you experience, the more you learn. However, who could tell that while you learn those things you might meanwhile lose others. Moreover, the way you lose them was extremely cruel.

"What did you mean?" It seemed that Sinmo heard a deeper meaning and quickly asked.

"There isn't any other meaning, she was just casually talking about it." Xiaoyu actually replied for me.

"You are not her, how can you know?" Sinmo countered.

"Of course I know, Jing'er is like my sister." Xiaoyu argued.

"Is it just a sister? That's great." Sinmo's mood suddenly reversed and cheered up.

"How is that relevant to you?" Xiaoyu hated to see him that cheerful.

"Of course it is! As long as she is not your girlfriend, I would still have the opportunity to make her my girlfriend!" Sinmo always managed to stun others.

"I am not suitable for you both." I said sincerely.

"Why?" Both of them actually cried together.

"Why are there so many whys in this world!" I tried to avoid them.

"I have the feeling that we are not worthy. You are definitely not someone an ordinary person or a noble could dream off." Sinmo can always make you feel immeasurably deep with the ordinary words.

“Sinmo, you seem to evaluate Jing’er really high!” Xiaoyu change from topic that he wanted to understand himself.

“I’ve never met a girl like her before, not even in a blood family. It was as if she could see everything clearly and everything in the world was like a passing gust of wind. She didn’t care about it at all.” Sinmo really seemed to have a natural dark gift in the psychological aspect.

“How could she be comparable to you? Weren’t you people who didn’t care about human life at all?” Xiaoyu didn’t agree with his opinion about me.

“Do you think she cares? She didn’t even care and look down on us nobles with powerful abilities. I think whether it was fear or love, there won’t be anything that would still move her heart in this world!” Sinmo always understood others as if he was talking about himself.

“Jing’er, you should at least defend yourself, right? Xiaoyu wasn’t unable to beat Sinmo and could only as the person herself for help.

“What he said was actually quite fitting for me.” I had no objections.

“Jing’er, how could you agree, his words don’t fit you at all.” Xiaoyu was not willing to believe that I was such a person.

“Not fitting doesn’t mean I am not!” I actually didn’t care at all. After so many years, what is there to hide about what kind of person I am? Furthermore, I didn’t really care. However, it looked like they both care about this and when I fully admit it; they actually didn’t know what to do anymore. Silence took over, but the noise surrounding us increased and I didn’t know when so many people arrived. It was double as much as during the day, a bunch there, a table here. Not sure what they were drinking, chatting loudly, their voices didn’t stop while laughing and bustling.

The night was getting darker and darker and the streets were shrouded in darkness.

There were two figures that weren’t fitting for the crowd around them and were running forward at a flying speed. Although I used the word ‘run’, but there was no difference in speed compared to flying. In short it was not comparable with the speed of an ordinary human.

“Where are you going?” Bern who was following behind for a long time finally could not help but ask.

“I’m hungry; of course I am going to find something to eat.” Lisa turned her head and replied.

“Isn’t there food everywhere here?” Bern looked around and saw a person’s shadow flying by. They were not flying but were travelling with the speed of flying.

“They are not my favorite food.” Lisa said very seriously.

“I understand.” Bern gently agreed with a soft cry and said nothing more. He knew very clearly that it was not strange for a 1500 year old vampire to have some strange hobby. It was already not only easy to survive a hundred years of dark nights and loneliness, let alone 1500 years? Moreover, how many people knew about their story, no matter if those stories were happy or sad eventually they required her to face it alone. After facing too many stories would change a human or a vampire. Letting her to have a more or less peculiar hobby was not really surprising.

“We are almost here, it is just in front.” Lisa interrupted Bern’s thoughts.

“Ok.” Bern agreed with another cry as if he was proving that he didn’t have any opinions and only listened to her. Exactly at that time, Lisa suddenly stopped in front and said with a happy face: “We arrived, it’s here.”

“Vampire restaurant!” Of course, when Bern raised his head he saw that there was a restaurant in front of him. He had heard that name before but had never been inside so inevitably he couldn’t help but be a little surprised.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 12 – Sacred Banquet

“Give me that table called “Sacred Banquet.” Lisa stood before the service desk and said while staring at the server.

“Really sorry, Miss. That table had been occupied by someone since afternoon. The waitress answered apologetically.

“What? How can this be... It’s already the time for the nobles to dine. You..... must make that person leave today. Do you understand?” Lisa spoke with a seriousness which was rarely seen.

“Sorry, I don’t think it’s possible. They have already eaten their food but they seemed to be waiting for something. There is also a noble with them, so.....” The waitress was feeling very troubled because she originally knew Lisa and understood that she was not to be messed with. Plus, she looked rather fierce now. Indeed. There were too many maybes in everything, thus life has a meaning. Having choices is the reason to continue moving forward.

“How about we discuss this with them and have them give us the table?” Bern who was standing beside them broke this awkward pause.

“Is that alright? Miss? Lisa asked but she was still looking fixedly into the lady’s eyes.

“Alright. Give it a try!” That lady said and reluctantly led them towards that table.

“Luvian? and you?” When Lisa and the others went around some obstacles surrounding the Sacred Banquet, Lisa saw two people which she had not expected.

“Another two are here. Looks like this restaurant really has a well-deserved reputation!” I sighed without even lifting up my head.

“You guys?” While I sighed, Xiaoyu who sat beside me was also shocked.

“What ‘you guys’ ‘you guys!’” I wanted to ask why you two are together! Don’t tell me it’s a date? Ha! Ha! Ha!” Lisa exclaimed along with the string of abhorrent laughter.

“But who is he?” Lisa added when she noticed Sinmo.

“Same as you.” I said to her while looking at Sinmo.

“Hello, Lisa! I am Sinmo!” Sinmo stood up very politely and stretched out his hand to show his friendliness.

“Hello. Are we friends?” With a dubious facial expression, Lisa stretched out her hand which was wearing a long lace glove and accepted his hand.

“If we can be friends today, that will be my honor!” Sinmo’s words and actions were always very gentlemanlike.

“Dididididi.....” Xiaoyu’s phone rang again.

“Excuse me!” Xiaoyu had no choice but to take this call. “Hello, I am Jun Yu.”

“What? Magic Party? Okay, I will be right there!” With this, Xiaoyu stood up and spoke with a troubled expression “Really sorry, Jing’er. I think.....I think I will have to send you home.”

“It looks like someone has awoken, but I still don’t want to sleep!” I took a sip of the tea and sat there with no intention of leaving.

“But I can’t leave you here alone!” It seemed like Xiaoyu really cared about me. Yet, I really did not want to go back since I have been greatly intrigued by the owner who I have never met. Plus, I felt relaxed when I was among them because in here, in their midst, I was no longer a cheater.

“Mr Hunter, if you are busy you can leave first. As a gentleman, I will send this lady home. In this regard you do not have to worry.” Sinmo stared at Xiaoyu and said solemnly.

“I think he doesn’t trust you! Ha! Ha! Ha! Once again, Lisa had a reason to guffaw presumptuously.

“Oh. It’s me. Am I really that scary?” Sinmo asked. It could be possible that

Sinmo thought of himself as a kind angel.

“There’s also me? So just relax.” Seeing Xiaoyu’s troubled appearance, Lisa took pity and uttered words of assurance.

“Then I shall leave first. Goodbye!” Xiaoyu understood clearly that he couldn’t stall anymore. “By the way give me a call when you get home. You know my house’s phone number, right? While he went two steps away, he looked back and exhorted.

“.....” I remained silent. Maybe it was a silent acquiescence or maybe I was just ignoring him. Maybe I just didn’t want to show how close I was with him. Well, who knows? And Xiaoyu departed. In the end, only four of us were left. Now there were no disputes in regard to the “Sacred Banquet.” Maybe Xiaoyu was destined to leave. Talking about “destiny” many people often view it in many different ways. They viewed this word with much more meanings than it’s original meaning. They always thought “It was written in the book, and so it will happen.” However, it was because they believed in “destiny,” therefore they had to tire themselves for this “destiny.”

“There aren’t a lot of people that knows my name except friends?” After Lisa sat down, she asked the first question.

“You come every year this day, so I took a slight notice!” Sinmo answered casually.

“Oh, only the name?” Lisa inquired with a faint sneer.

“Also, you have been through fifteen centuries. Not bad, right?” Sinmo added as he tried to save his face which was more important to the humans.

“Oh, you know this too? Luvian told you?” Lisa turned and said while staring at me.

“By the way, I have been hearing about who you called Luvian but no one here has that name!” Sinmo seemed to suddenly thought about something.

“Luvian, this is your bad. Chatting with him without even telling him your name.” Lisa spoke to Luvian like a senior instructing a junior.

“Is that necessary?” I had absolutely no interest in this, so I was lazy to explain.

“What? You are called Luvian? Aren’t you called Jing’er?” Sinmo still seemed to be doubtful.

“Is that important?” I said as I felt more and more bored.

“True that. Names are just a symbol. Once years past, no one would remember anymore.” Sinmo seemed to recall some unhappy past, thus we went into silence naturally.

“Looks like you really like this table?” After a long time of silence, I suddenly looked at Lisa and questioned.

“Like? Ehm, no.” Sadness flashed past Lisa’s face as she answered.

“Hate?” I asked again.

“Also no.”

“That means you have an unforgettable past related to it?” I continued to inquire though I had already guessed it.

“Why can’t I hide anything from your eyes?” Lisa asked back with a helpless and pitiful tone.

“Stop appearing like you are being interrogated. I have no interest in listening to your disgusting past.” Although I said so but actually I was thinking differently in my mind. Because I knew clearly that sometimes the past was a secret and also a pain which exists forever.

“Many years ago, this area was a habitation for the heretics. The restaurant we are now at was their sacred altar and this table was the place they used to place the gifts for the fans. Around one thousand, five hundred years ago, a ritual was held here. It was also the last time this ritual was held and this the name of this ritual was “Sacred Banquet.” Lisa looked really sad now. This was the first time I have seen her like this

“I know a few stories regarding those heretics, but I have no idea whether it’s true or false.” Seeing that she was really sorrowful, I felt sorry for her.

“You really aren’t young! Ha! Ha! Ha! Lisa suddenly changed the topic, but her laughter still sounded slightly forceful.

“I think seventeen years old doesn’t count as old!” It seemed like someone

really wasn't worth the pity.

"But it's impossible for a seventeen years old child to know about these." Sinmo interrupted.

"Is it not possible for me to hear about it?" I really don't understand that why I must find reason for every sentence I said.

"Then what did you heard?" Lisa asked.

"These heretics believed and worshiped the God of Life. They believed that blood is the source of all living beings. Every ten years, they would held a ritual and offer a sacrifice to their God of Life. If you have some imaginations, you would maybe say you can imagine what the sacrifice was." I told some stories from the depth of my memories. Sometimes, I really think having some additional memories is quite useful. Although they wouldn't help you get full marks in every subject or let you know what other species are exist besides the Nobles. For example, the wolverines, mummies, demons or monsters which caused disasters in movies.

"The hot drink of blood!" Sinmo exclaimed as anticipation was seen on his face.

"It's not that simple. They needed a stainless girl that met the conditions." Lisa added.

"Conditions? A stainless girl was not enough?" It seemed like Sinmo could be satisfied very easily.

"That's a condition for misfit little nobles like you." I said as I felt like laughing.

"Oh, then what conditions did they demanded?" Sinmo asked as he really couldn't figure it out.

"For example: green eyes, a mixed blood of four countries and silver long hair. I don't remember the rest."

"Born during a full moon at the stroke of midnight." Lisa added again.

"That means you dyed your hair?" I looked at her pitched-black long hair and questioned.

"Luvian, I really have to admire your imagination." Having someone point out

that she had changed her appearance slightly, Lisa was slightly unhappy. Actually, dyeing her silver hair black was unnecessary. In today's society, there were countless people who dyed their hair into golden monkeys, red parrots, and green tortoises so people naturally became inured to the unusual.

"Did you see the appearance of that God of Life? It was always hard for me to imagine the things that shouldn't exist in this world.

"Are you in a hurry to get married?" Lisa asked while looking at me evilly.

"Unfortunately, it doesn't like me as I don't have long silver hair or green eyes?" I explained.

"That means you are a mixed-blood of four countries?" Lisa was trying to catch my drift again.

"No, maybe there were no countries when you were born? Ha! Ha! Ha!" Lisa laughed. Why is she always so annoying, especially that laughter.

"As the person involved, please allow me to correct one point. Actually, I have no nationality so I wouldn't be a mixed blood of a few countries." I was saying some truth, some truths could not be understood by others.

"That's not possible!" Sinmo was the first to question.

"No, that's possible. For example, *dead people* doesn't have nationality." Lisa did not spend thousand years living in vain. She had even grown wiser.

"Wrong. I am still alive and was never dead." You can know just by looking at my neck.

"Really?" Lisa was very suspicious.

"Do you want to take a look at my neck?" I spoke with a tone which clearly meant that I would hate to pull down my collar.

"Yes!" Lisa actually agreed happily as if she did not hear my feelings of disgust. However, it wouldn't be possible as I have said it very obvious. Unless, she has been expecting this for a long time.

"Too bad I am wearing turtleneck today." I had no choice but to say it clearly and distinctly again.

“Then when are you not wearing turtleneck?” I could see Lisa really planned to pester me.

“When I wear a dress.” Of course, I meant the thing that would fluttered once a breeze blows.

“I have more than enough time!” Lisa said something that couldn’t be more true.

“Then how did you obtained so much time?” I changed the topic back again.

“‘The God of Life’ gave it. Do you even have to ask?” When mentioning the God of Life, Lisa’s tone showed much more respect than just now.

“Looks like he was not only very handsome but also possessed an eternally young appearance!” Even the obtuse Sinmo understands.

“Looks like mentality is still proportional to age.” Lisa smiled. It was a natural smile but I felt like it was unnatural when it was placed on her face. Maybe it was because I was deeply poisoned!

“But I have never heard that girls who became sacrifices would still live. This is a little weird!” In regards to the ritual that I know, the sacrifice will die after every drop of blood was drawn. You can tell their “God of Life” was not very kind and merciful.

“A thing that is even harder to imagine: are you perhaps more attractive than the previous ones?” I added another question.

“You! Nevermind, I am not in a mood to quarrel with you today. Fine, I will tell you guys maybe it will make me famous?” Lisa held up the “red wine which she had ordered and shook it gently before her face. She then said,”At that time, my heart was broken because I knew clearly that the people that cared about my life were no longer breathing. The only thing I could do now was to wait for my own death. Therefore, I allowed them to place the delirious me on the rectangular altar. They surrounded and went circles around me with candles in their hands as they muttered some unknown words or spells. I was not able to see clearly nor hear clearly. Suddenly, they all disappeared. I am not saying they vanished into thin air but I couldn’t see them in my view. At that moment, a huge object suppressed the top of my body causing me who had difficulty in breathing to

gasped for air. Next, a tremendous pain was felt on my neck and I had no knowledge of what happened next until I opened my eyes again. The images I saw could never be forgotten. No matter how long I live, it would still be impossible to forget. I was still lying on this table when I woke up, yet everything around me changed. Redness was seen on the walls, on the floor, everywhere. The more frightening things were the scattered pieces of corpses, hands, feet and horrifying heads. However, I was already unable to feel fear during that time. I sat up slowly and naturally touched my neck. It was hurt but it was no longer bleeding.

“How do you feel? This was my first try. I really didn’t expect that it actually worked.” At this moment, a voice asked.”

“Who..who are you?” Out of natural reaction, I blurted out a question.

“I should be considered as a father to you now!” At this moment, I realized that a man around thirty years old stood at my side. He was dressed in noble clothes and was glowing with health.

“My father have already been killed by them.” I had a clear mind.

“That’s your human father, but I am your noble father.” While he was still speaking, he approached me slowly.

“Noble? I am not a noble.” I knew who I was and what status I had.

“The nobles that I am talking about aren’t the kind you think. It also has many names. For example: Longevity Species, vampires, blood family, demons, monsters,etc. You have heard of it,right?” He explained to me again and again.

“You are saying I have turned into a vampire?” I touched my face and scrutinized my hands. “No, I am still me. I did not go through any transformation. It’s impossible for me to become those blood-sucking monsters.”

“Transformation? What an interesting word. How big do you want the transformation to be? The face of a demon or sharp claws?

“No?” I was still a naive and innocent little girl.

“Of course not! The only transformation is that your sharp canine teeth have grown sharper. However, this has good use.” He halted before me and stroke my

head softly like how a kind father often does.

“That’s great! But do I really have to drink human blood?” That was the thing I was most afraid of. I did not want to hurt anyone, whether it’s an acquaintance or stranger, kind person or evil one. I just didn’t want more people to lose their family, friends and home.

“This? Let me ponder that. Of course not, if you can buy it with money!” Of course, during that time it was impossible to buy it anywhere.

“But I don’t want to hurt others.” I lowered my head.

“Then just drink animal blood!” He said casually as if drinking blood was a very reasonable thing.

“That means the thing that just bit my neck was a vampire. Was that you??” I asked as I remembered some broken and interrupted images.

Yes, he is a noble. Please allow me to use these two words. But it wasn’t me. That guy got injured and fled.” Not a sign of lying could be seen on his face.

“Then who is he?” To be honest, when I asked this question not a bit of hatred was felt in my heart. I only felt some unknown sense of familiarity.

“He was a guy that I liked, but he did not like me.” I could tell the “like” that he had said was very meaningful.

“Oh, then what should I do now?” I continued asking.

“Follow me! I will teach you like a real father, about eating, sleeping and entertainment.” And this was the end of the story. My new father and I formed a new and peculiar family.” Lisa sighed softly after telling her greatest secret.

“It’s very easy to tell that your father is the owner of this restaurant. From his style of work, he should be part of the secret party!” I continued speaking.

“No, it’s Magic Party.” Sinmo suddenly opened his mouth and spoke.

“That’s right. My father belongs to the Magic Party.” Lisa confirmed.

“Magic Party?” The truth of the owner as the member of the Magic Party shocked me and Bern.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 13: Magic Party

“Magic Party? You mean The Magic Party — was anyone else involved?” Xiaoyu rushed to the scene, muttering continuously along the way, “no casualties, no casualties.”

“No.” The two brothers answered in unison.

“That’s good. Did you guys destroy it?” Xiaoyu was extremely relieved by their response in the negative, but was incredulous when he saw the pile of sand on the ground.

“No, the Magic Party one did that.” Xuqing seemed to be contemplating something.

“But we really don’t understand why the Magic Party would have engaged in such blatant provocation! No matter what, this is still Secret Party territory!” Xuxing was completely perplexed.

“I think the biggest possibility was that the balance was upset.” Xuqing’s tone was exceedingly cold as he touched the gun in his hand.

“The possibility of this is great. Although the two parties have been at odds with each other for a long time, they were keeping the peace because of a balance in power. But now.” Xiaoyu had gained some knowledge from the mound of broken and dirty records which his father left behind, but he didn’t know anything beyond that. That’s why he didn’t even know what a dark gift was.

“The guys just now were really strong!” Xuqing suddenly blurted out this sentence.

“Looks like we’ve got trouble!” Xuxing sighed with emotion.

“If it’s really as we think, then not only us but all the humans, particularly this city is in danger.” Xiaoyu’s face grew heavy with concern but he was clearly aware of what was the Magic Party and what was the Secret Party. If the balance of power between the two parties was upset then all of humanity will face a disaster.

“Then should we help the Secret Party?” Xuxing asked with a smile, but it wasn’t really a smile.

“I actually hope that the Secret Party can help us!” Xiaoyu said as he walked back to the car door.

“What have you heard today?” Xuqing didn’t care about Xuxing, the former looked up coldly and asked after shoving his gun back into his pocket.

“Let’s talk in the car!” Xiaoyu wormed into the car after opening the door, closely followed by Xuqing and Xuxing.

“You went to lunch with her today?” Xuxing started interrogating as the car started to move.

“You’ve been to my place?” Xiaoyu didn’t directly answer the question.

“Yes, we went to find you around 3 pm, but Xiaoya said you took a friend out for lunch and hadn’t been back yet. It’s most likely the girl from yesterday!” It looked like Xuxing was also interested in the girl with no past.

“What did you hear?” Xuqing was uninterested in the process. He only cared about the result and that was who, or what, they had met last night.

“Yes, what did she say?” Xuxing also wanted to know but for reasons obviously different from Xuqing.

“Nothing much. She only said that Lisa wasn’t her friend and that she couldn’t remember how they met.” Xiaoyu answered as he drove. He naturally wouldn’t mention the other matters he discussed with Luvian.

“Just that?” Xuxing seemed unsatisfied.

“And that she used to have a boyfriend, but he was killed by vampires.” Xiaoyu had to “reveal” a little bit more.

“Looks like she’s seen vampires many times before, no wonder she wasn’t

afraid!” Thinking back about the events of last night, an expression of dawning enlightenment appeared on Xuxing’s face.

“If a vampire hugged your neck right now, would you not be afraid?” Who knew that Xuqing would toss him a cold retort.

“I...” Xuxing could speak no more because he was clearly aware that if that was the case, he would be scared out of his mind. Even though he had seen countless blood family and killed countless vampires, what use was that? He would still be afraid, that was human nature! But she...

“Then why wasn’t she afraid?” Xuxing thought and asked again, but there was only silence in the car, because no one could answer his question. All questions have answers, but no everyone could find them.

“However, I learned a secret today. Every vampire receives an incredible power the moment they become part of the blood family. No one is able to predict beforehand what kind of power it will be and no one is able to transmute it to another power afterwards. They call it a dark gift. Every vampire has one, but each power is different.” Xiaoyu told his companions what he had just learned. This would benefit them in their future hunts, even though they didn’t currently know what use it would have.

“Oh, interesting!” Xuxing fumbled for his notebook and recorded this according to his self invented code.

“She told you this?” Xuxing suddenly lifted his head in query after a while of recording.

“No, she only mentioned it. Sinmo gave the details.” Xiaoyu said.

“Who’s Sinmo?” It was the first time that Xuqing had heard this name, and was quite curious about this person given that he knew so much.

“A vampire.” Xiaoyu seemed to be worried about something.

“Where did you go eat? ...the vampire restaurant?!” Xuxing’s tone suddenly changed to one of interrogation. Xiaoyu didn’t respond but only nodded with intent.

“So there really are vampires here. But under the cover of night, they appear

the same as ordinary people if they don't take any blood. How did you know he was a vampire?" Xuqing was extremely surprised. After all, he himself had gone there many times, but had not met even one bloodsucking animal.

"Jing'er said he was a vampire and he admitted it. I think there can be no mistake." Xiaoyu believed that Jing'er wouldn't lie to him, but this faith didn't seem to be born out of a rational reason.

"Her again. Why is there always a member of the blood family around here? The thousand year old Lisa last night and now Sinmo." Xuxing found it harder and harder to trust her.

"Speaking of Lisa, we met her again today. Jing'er still with them right now." Xiaoyu's face wore unconcealed worry.

"You left her there alone?" Xuxing was more than a little shocked. He had thought that Xiaoyu cared deeply for the girl but now he'd left her alone in such a dangerous place and left!

"I... I wanted to send her home, but she wanted to sit a while longer. I had no other choice, I couldn't.... well drag her home!" His tone was suffused with Xiaoyu's resignation.

"Why did she stay?" Xuqing suddenly blurted out this question, helping everyone immediately realize something they hadn't thought of before.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 14: Father

“Why the huge reaction. He only used to be!” Lisa shouted, the desire to protect fully evident from her tone. Bern was scared almost immediately into silence and he ducked his head to observe his fingers.

“The Magic Party opening a restaurant on Secret Party territory isn’t shocking news?” I looked at Bern, he was too frightened to make a noise. “Why are you so loud, be careful of scaring your new little friend.”

“Is it possible to surprise you? I could never tell!” Lisa made a joke again. Perhaps she had noted Bern’s reaction, and so sought to lighten up the tense atmosphere caused by her sharp words.

“This only proves that you have no observation skills.” I didn’t want to negate her good intentions and so played along.

“But, a Magic Party member who opened a restaurant, that sounds a bit ridiculous!” I couldn’t hold in my laughter as I spoke, it was a feeling I hadn’t had in a long time.

“Oh! You laugh!” Lisa exclaimed in astonishment.

“I wasn’t born out of an egg, why wouldn’t I laugh.” I extremely disliked her habit of making a big deal out of nothing. It wasn’t a big deal originally, but her emphasis made it seem like I hadn’t known how to laugh before, and only through her help did I learn something that everyone underneath the sky could do.

“You can’t say I’m making a mountain out of a molehill! I’ve never seen you smile in all the years that I’ve known you!” Lisa seemed to have been sorely aggrieved and pouted fiercely.

“Who can laugh when faced with a monster.” I didn’t pull my punches when

sparring with females, not to mention she wasn't the fragile and delicate type.

"Why are you always at odds with me? Did I kill your parents? But I don't remember harming a single good person!" Lisa looked at me perplexed, as if recalling something. Perhaps an old person's memory was never too good.

"Do you think you have the right to?" My tone immediately turned as frosty as snow, and my eyes were filled with hostility.

"Jing'er, what's wrong? It was just a small joke! Why so scary, even I'm a bit frightened!" Sinmo had been sitting silently all this time, but even he was scared by my look and called out involuntarily.

"Nothing!" I responded coldly. There was actually a pain in my heart which was as frigid as winter and cut to the bone, so painful that I was unable to consider the feelings of others.

After my icy rage, even Sinmo and Lisa made no more sounds, not to mention Bern. The surroundings quieted down, as if the banter and chatter a moment ago had belonged to another world.

"Sir, the restaurant is going to conduct our annual inventory check. May we ask you to leave? Our deepest apologies!"

"Ma'am, the restaurant is going to conduct our annual inventory check. May we ask you to leave? Our deepest apologies!"

We sat silently as the voices of waitresses asking guests to leave surrounded us. We continued not saying a single word, or perhaps no one knew which words to use to break the silence. After all, none of them had seen me truly angry before, and it was natural that they didn't know what to do. The unnatural thing was why the inventory check had to be conducted so early.

"Miss, the restaurant is is going to conduct our annual inventory check. May we ask you to leave? Our deepest apologies!" A waitress stood in front of me not long thereafter, asking me to leave.

"She is my friend!" Lisa spoke before I could open my mouth.

"My apologies for disturbing you." The waitress left respectfully afterwards.

"Is he really coming?" There was no way I would thank Lisa for her "good

intentions", perhaps they weren't any real good intentions at all.

"It's about time, father always likes to come early." It was the first time that Lisa had used such a respectful tone in front of me. It suddenly hit me with a stabbing pain. 'Father' is it? After so many years, why would my heart still be hurt by this word? Why do the wounds of the heart always start bleeding again whenever you think they're fully healed?

"Jing'er, are you alright?" Simon asked after seeing me with a face full of concern.

"Why wouldn't I be!" I guess my expression wasn't looking too good then.

"As long as you're okay. Aren't you a bit afraid that you'll meet a vampire even stronger than me?" Lisa started her banter again.

"What do you think?" I didn't directly answer her question, because the answer was a foregone conclusion. The waitresses started closing the doors and shuttering the windows, as if it really was closing down. They then all left silently. The restaurant was curiously silent, as if every person and item present was just a mere illusion. The only thing I could hear was my own breathing and heartbeat. I think it was the same for them.

I looked around, suddenly thinking that the overly respectful faces were a bit comical. Who did they think they were greeting? Just an older vampire, and here they were making it seem like the manifestation of a true god. But on the other hand, perhaps the manifestation of a true god wouldn't even see this kind of treatment! It looked like ghosts will only believe in ghosts, but why do humans believe in gods and not themselves? May this is the reason why mankind will never move out of the jurisdiction of gods!

"Luvian, what are you looking at?" Sinmo seemed to like to stare at me when he had nothing better to do.

"Seeing how many believers are in this restaurant." I turned my head in response.

"Quite a few!" Sinmo smiled.

"Are you not" I suddenly thought of this question.

“No, but I’ve had some dealings with him.” Sinmo played with the cup in his hand.

“No wonder you knew things about Lisa.” I brought up another topic.

“Who are you, seriously?” Lisa stared at him, her eyes full of doubt.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 15: Sinmo

As all of you can see, I am a two or three hundred years old small vampire who is considered slightly handsome, a bit wealthy and with a lot of knowledge.” Sinmo answered with a grin.

“Oh. So that means if you ever have your eyes on a girl from any family, it would really count as a blessing to her!” Lisa was rarely serious, while Sinmo only smiled and stared at me without uttering a single word.

“Why are you looking at me?” I asked sulkily.

“It looks like Luvian in our family is really a blessed person!” Lisa smiled evilly.

“Who’s part of your family!” I glared at Lisa fiercely. Yet, she didn’t seem to care at all as she smiled even more evilly.

“You two are really close. It’s really rare for a human and a vampire to have such a good relationship.” Sinmo stared at us while he was squabbling with enjoyment.

“Well, you are wrong about this!” Lisa immediately corrected.

“Indeed. We are not on good terms!” I also declared.

“Not this. I meant our relationship isn’t even the relationship of humans and vampires.” Lisa said with a serious tone which was rarely seen.

“Aren’t you a vampire?” Sinmo asked in astonishment.

“You really grew only more handsome but not wiser. I am talking about her.” Lisa said as she looked towards me with a mysterious expression.

“Don’t tell me Jing’er is really a vampire!” Sinmo was shocked as his mouth agaped slightly, unable to be shut.

“To be honest, I am not very clear but I can guarantee you that she is definitely not a human.” Lisa actually spoke sternly again as if she was always a serious person.

“Jing’er, you.....” Although I lowered my head, but I could still sense Sinmo’s eyes were staring at me directly as if the answer was now written on my face

“I think we were discussing about you just now?” Without lifting up my head, I changed the topic of this conversation. I did not want this topic to continue because even I myself did not know if I was a human or not, or what thing I was.

“Did I not talk about this just now?” Sinmo noticed my displeasure and didn’t dare to ask anymore.

“That’s too vague!” Lisa also began pestering Sinmo. Maybe she knew clearly that the questions about me couldn’t be understood in such a short time. If it was that simple, she wouldn’t have followed me for years without a clue of what was going on with me.

“He is.....” Bern who was sitting at the side suddenly spoke two words. However, when he met Sinmo’s eyes, he immediately lowered his head and no longer talked. Yet, that scene had revealed everything.

“It seems like Bern is very afraid of you!” Lisa pointed out sharply as she sighed.

“You only realize this now.. so slow.” I said with a disdainful tone.

“Do you mean you already found out what background he has?”

“Well, no. However, I noticed something unusual before you got here and Bern’s reaction had proved my doubts.” I stared at Sinmo as I spoke while casually casting a glance at Lisa.

“Oh. Did I give myself away?” Sinmo’s courteous smile always gave people a comfortable feeling.

‘It was not you, but your fellow-creatures.” I flashed a smile as I said. I have been smiling many times today, it is something that had never happened in many years. Plus, every smile was sincere.

“What do you mean by that?” Sinmo consulted mannerly.

“All the other single girls out there were surrounded by a swarm of vampires. Yet, why none of the other vampires didn’t come annoy me again when you sat opposite me. And...” I paused and continued explaining, “The moment Bern saw you, he lowered his head involuntarily and acted in/with a constrained manner. Consequently, he originally knew you and was very afraid of you. This means you are part of the secret party and your position is higher than Bern. Also.....”

“Also what?” Lisa hastily asked.

“Why are you so impatient?” I flashed her a glare and continued speaking, “Also, Bern knows you but you don’t know him and no one has greeted you since you have came in, which means that you do not know the other guests. This tell me that it’s impossible for the other guests to tell Bern about you. Therefore, there is only one person that could have told him these things, that person is the restaurant owner who is the only one familiar with you. Finally, the one point that we can understand is that Sinmo has a special relationship with the owner instead of being just slightly acquainted like what Sinmo had said.” I explained everything in one breath, but I had no idea if that slow brain will be able to understand.

“I didn’t expect that, can I hide anything from you, Jing’er?” Sinmo grinned even more sophisticatedly, showing the demeanor of a gentleman.

“If that’s the case, you just have to disclose the truth. Plus, father will tell me when he comes. Is it necessary to keep this a secret?” It looks like Lisa is demanding to know it now.

“Alright! I will be friends with you two today. Actually, I don’t have a great background. I am just a Novitiate Elder in the secret party.” Sinmo’s tone sounded as if he was not taking this/his position seriously.

“Not bad. You are already a Novitiate Elder at this young age. To my knowledge, there are only one Great Elder, three Vice-Elders and ten Novitiate Elders among these parties. If the Great Elder disappears, then one of the Vice-Elders will be chosen to get promoted to Great Elder. When there is an empty spot among the Vice-Elders, it will be chosen from the Novitiate Elders. Luvian, looks like you have a very good luck! You must grasp this chance!” Lisa learned what she wanted to know and her mood immediately became happy. As a result,

she started making fun of me.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 16: Louyu

“The restaurant owner is here! The restaurant owner is here! Everyone, be quiet!” A sound was heard coming from an unknown place, and the hall immediately became dead silent. The originally soft voices which were discussing stopped, and all those seated stood up, including Bern. As for me, of course I wouldn’t be that respectful. Since I don’t even know what he looks like, why should I stand up and make myself suffer! Plus, I have always pursued the policy: If I could sit, I would absolutely not stand, and if I could lie down, I would absolutely not sit. Therefore, it was impossible for me to stand up and welcome him. However, there was one thing that was giving me a headache; I couldn’t see what kind of person he is when I was sitting like this! (The “Person” here refers to ordinary and also extraordinary ones.)

The lucky thing was that this restaurant owner came in from the inner door beside us. Although he was not very close to me, I could still see him very clearly. Clothed in a black cloak, he had black short hair and a pair of black eyes. Black, a beautiful and familiar color. On the whole, he was not someone that I hated. As he passed our side, he turned and cast a smile at us, before continuing directly towards the small stage diagonally opposite us. A black grand piano was placed on the small stage, but the performer had already disappeared. When he stepped upon the stage, he turned and faced everyone, peering at the ones in the restaurant with a sharp glint in his eyes. And yet, the hall still remained silent, no sound was made.

“As usual, I am here today to simply ask whether the friends here know of, or maybe have heard of, a person named Louyu.”

“No!” “No!” Next, the answers resounded in the hall from time to time. After some time had passed, the answering voices stopped, and the hall became dead silent again.

“Could it be him!” I sighed softly.

“You know?” He uttered the two words and before I could react, my whole body was lifted up by an enormous strength, and was floating above the ‘Sacred Banquet.’ This feeling of being in the air wasn’t good but it was also not bad. It was as if my entire body had lost the force of gravity. Feeling as light as a feather, I didn’t even know where I should place my hands while Sinmo and Lisa beside me were shocked. They couldn’t even utter a word as they stared at me, who was floating in the air.

“I do not know if the one you were talking about is him.” With no facial expression, I stared straight in his eyes, showing not even a hint of fear.

“Are you really not afraid?” Instead, he thought my calmness was weird.

“What do you think?” I still appeared the way I was, but as I had adapted to the floating, I naturally felt more comfortable and talked more casually.

“A little human girl actually possessed such audacity. This is rare indeed. Alright, if you answer my questions seriously, I promise to not hurt you.” He laughed heartily, as if he was about to bestow me with something.

“What do you want to know?” At this moment, I had an extremely weird feeling in my heart. I seemed to have decided that the guy in my mind was the one that the person before me wanted to find. However, there was no rational reason as to why I thought so.

“Good. This ‘Louyu’ that you know is a guy, right?” The owner asked.

“Yes.” I answered.

“He is with a woman?” The restaurant owner inquired again

“Yes.” I replied again

“That woman must be very old, right?” The restaurant owner continued to ask.

“No, she is his wife, and she looked as young as him.” I continued to answer his questions.

“Then does he have a mother?” The restaurant owner questioned with a slightly different kind of tone.

“As far as I know, she died of a sickness soon after being abandoned by Louyu’s

father.” I was still calm like I how was just now, or you could say I was trying to pretend to be calm.

“Really?” A sorrowful expression flashed across the restaurant owner’s face.

“The Louyu I know told me so.” I answered robotically, because I didn’t want any words of emotion to remind me of the past hidden deep within my mind, especially the extremely unhappy images.

“Is he a human or a vampire?” The owner pondered for a few moments and continued questioning.

“He was a human before the year 89, and he became a noble after that.” Why did I remember so clearly that it was year 89?

“How did he become a vampire?” As the owner asked more and more, he began inquiring more details.

“To save his child, he sucked the blood of a vampire.” I spoke slowly as if the words had been uttered without a second thought.

“Then how is he now?” The owner paused and continued.

“He died.” My heart suddenly convulsed in my chest and my mind went blank. “How did he die?” The owner’s voice was no longer serene; his voice was even shaking slightly.

“He was killed.” At this moment, the pain in my heart was indescribable.

“Impossible. With his power, it’s impossible to be killed easily.” The owner’s voice was already slightly furious now.

“He was really killed” I felt extreme pain as I spoke these words and every word uttered was like an ice pick pierced into my heart.

“Who killed him?” These words seemed to be roared out with the hell’s fire within from the owner’s mouth.

“I don’t want to answer anymore!” I finally broke down and yelled loudly.

“No, you must tell me!” The restaurant owner stretched his right hand and gestured softly. I immediately flew forcefully towards him and halted before him. At such a close distance, I could sense every odor coming from his body clearly.

“You!” Suddenly, an unforgettable sense of familiarity collided with every nerve of mine.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 17: Murderer

“On the night of the year ‘02, did you kill a sixteen or seventeen year old boy at Snowy Mountain Park?” I suddenly shouted at the owner furiously.

“Year ‘02?” He actually really began thinking. After a few moments, he shook his head and answered, “It’s has been such a long time that I don’t remember.”

“He has pitched-black short hair—under the moonlight, it would flash a green light. He also had a pair of deep and spirited eyes, but he might’ve looked spiritless at that moment. He should’ve been standing blankly at the small fountain beside a long bench.” I recalled every scene during that time details. Unknowingly, tears flowed down my face, yet I still spoke distinctly.

“Oh! it’s that kid. Sigh. He didn’t taste good at all.” He contemplated and sighed emotionally like he was evaluating a dish of food that he had savored.

“You.....” The anger had rendered me slightly speechless. “You took his life away, yet you are actually still so scornful! Is this the style of a magic party member?”

“Oh. You knew I was a member of the magic party? But I am no longer one.” With this, he let out a sigh. He also seemed to have lots of painful memories.

“Humph! I don’t care about the Magic Party or Secret Party at all. However, you killed him so I definitely won’t let you off! I glared at him ferociously as a murderous aura glowed in my eyes.

“Hahaha! A little human girl actually said she won’t let me off! Hahaha! This is hilarious!” He guffawed while telling the fellow creatures around him.

“What’s so funny?” His laughter made me even angrier.

“Not bad. Your courage is commendable. I admire you. Alright! If you answer two more questions, then I will be at your disposal.” His tone suddenly changed

as he spoke while staring at me calmly. Within his eyes, determination could be seen clearly.

“Okay. What do you want to ask?” I said while peering into his eyes.

“Is that boy really that important to you? To the point that it made you so desperate.” This was his first question.

“He was the only person I knew during that time, the only one that I could talk to; the only one that cared about me. To me at that time, losing him changed my world into a lonely place, a place with no life and no sounds. Can you see how important he was to me?” I recalled deeply the feelings I had at that time— Loneliness, helplessness and fear, while all of my senses were lost.

“It looks like I really killed a very important person.” He lifted his head and sighed regretfully.

“The second question?” Instead, I reminded.

“Who killed Louyu?” He asked this question again.

“I don’t want to answer!” I resolutely refused to answer this question

“Don’t you want to take revenge for that boy?” He inquired suspiciously.

“I do, but I still can’t answer this question.” I still told him in a resolute tone. This was the only question that I won’t answer no matter what.

“If so, then I will use this secret to take revenge!” I pondered for a while and made the last decision.

“No, you must tell me!” he roared and choked my throat with only one hand. He was actually thinking of killing me.

“No way!” Although my throat felt very painful because of the choke, I definitely wouldn’t change what I had decided, no matter the cost.

“Are you really not afraid of death?” He glared into my eyes, like he was really going to eat me.

“You want to bite me?” I did not answer his question but asked in a scornful tone.

“If you force me!” He paused for a second and answered.

“ I didn’t expect that vampires to be forced to drink blood. Humph! Does it mean that you were also forced when you bit him?” I felt even more scornful for his reason.

“Yes. I had no choice but to suck his blood.”

He actually agreed with my words and admitted it.

“Perhaps he has answers that you desired to know but refused to tell you?” For a moment, I actually didn’t know how to react.

“Well, no. However, I was being pursued by Yama during that time and was using a huge amount of my strength. If I did not replenish myself in time, I would be in danger.” Surprisingly, he really did give a reason while everyone around nodded in agreement to his words.

“Yes. This is the way you vampires survive. You guys always hurt others just for your own good.” I detest the people that sacrificed others easily for their own sake. No matter whom you are and how strong you are, you have no right to let other people pay for your own survival.

“You will never understand our pain, so you don’t have any right to criticize whether our actions are correct not.” He was slightly angered as he rebuked.

“Correct? Yes, what is correct? If it’s correct, then you guys shouldn’t exist when there were humans in this world! I yelled out loud, yet I was shouting out in my mind, “And I shouldn’t exist!”

“Alright, since you say so, then I will make you one of us and let you know clearly the pain and struggles of a noble!” With this, he slowly pulled me closer. When my neck was almost against his mouth, everything seemed to be motionless and even the movement of air could be seen clearly

“NO!” Just when he revealed his fangs, Sinmo and Lisa yelled simultaneously; Unknowingly, they had already stood near the stage.

“Are you guys really going to oppose me just for this insolent little girl?” The owner withdrew his lethal weapon and asked harshly.

“We dare not. However, Father, she is just a little girl that knows nothing of this world, so why should you break your resolution just because of her?” Lisa

persuaded slowly. Actually, she was not doing it for my sake.

“Yes! Owner, why would you take a teenage girl seriously? She only spoke without a second thought because she was too sad. Are you really going to make her a member of the blood family just because of her childish words? Isn’t this punishment too heavy?” While Sinmo was really persuading sincerely.

“It looks like you all care a lot about her. Fine. I will let her go if she answers the question. I will even promise to do one thing for her. If not.....” With this, he averted his eyes to look at me, as if he was waiting for my answer.

“No! Impossible!” I glared at him fiercely as I crushed the only chance of reconciliation. The surroundings became dead silent again. The eyes of the owner before me flashed a blood-red icy glow as he opened his mouth and moved to kiss me on my neck.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 18: Bloodlust

“Father!” Lisa shouted. “Jing’er!” Sinmo screamed at the same time.

Blood slowly dripped down along the corner of my mouth, and a dark red thick liquid dripped on his arm. I fiercely sucked at the stream of blood, and I didn’t know how many years it had been since I had last tasted such a sweet taste. As the nectar slowly flowed through my body, each one of my cells was nourished. That kind of feeling kept awakening memories from the past that were buried a moment ago.

I remembered that on a cloudy afternoon, the usually crowded park became quiet. I was walking alone aimlessly here, as this was another lonely day after my parents had left me. Since my parents had left, I had become a frequent visitor here, because I liked the noise and the joyful laughter. Maybe because those were things that I didn’t possess in my own life.

Like I did in the past, I sat on that wooden bench next to that small fountain while observing my surroundings. Since there were not that many people around, I could only stare at a mother and her child. It was a nice young woman holding the hand of a little girl who was maybe three or four years old. That little girl had a round, chubby face and looked really cute. Perhaps my eyes stared at her too long, since they seemed to have realized that I was looking at them and turned their heads, giving me a friendly smile.

“Mama, why is that big sister watching us?” The little girl asked with an incomparably tender voice.

“Baby, it is because you are too cute!” Mama’s expression was one of incomparable affection.

“Really?” The little girl asked skeptically.

“How could mama lie?!” Mama smiled while saying. A glittering, gentle light could be seen on her face, and I could clearly feel that it was love. It was a mother sending her endless love towards her child, and it was exactly what the lonely me desired, which was why I felt so strongly about this scene.

Afterwards, they continued playing on the small slide inside the park with indescribable joy.

“Mama, I want to eat ice cream,” the little girl who was sweating profoundly from playing asked her mother.

“Alright baby, mama will go buy it for you,” the mother readily agreed, and then added: “However, don’t run around and obediently play here.”

“I understand mama. Come back quickly!” The little girl happily complied.

“Mama will be back very soon!” The mother promised, and walked in the direction of the small forest, as the ice cream shop was at the end of it.

Although the forest was not very big, it was very dense, so usually no one would go there. Generally, a place that was always empty would frequently, with no good reason at all, create an eerie feeling; hence it would get even more deserted. With such a vicious circle, it naturally would become a place forgotten by the world. What existed in such places and what happened there was no longer something that ordinary people could imagine or understand.

Although the mother was somewhat afraid of that small forest, she also wanted to quickly return to her daughter’s side, and so she took up the courage to choose this shortcut.

While walking, the mother kept turning her head to look around and joyfully smile. However, when she approached the forest, a quick shadow broke all the happiness and joy. It flew across the edge of the forest, took away the mother and disappeared in the depths of the forest without a sound.

The little girl continued playing as if her mother was with her. She ran everywhere and played without worrying about anything. Looking at her, I was reminded of my past self, and when I was about the same size as her, I also liked to play happily, just like her. I felt joy like her, and I did not know what loneliness and pain was.

“Let me go, help! Help!” In a deep place within the forest, the mother’s scream crossed each leaf and vanished in that boundless forest. It was still peaceful outside, and the daughter still happily slid down the slide, unaware of the distant screams. I could actually hear each word clearly.

“Stop screaming, no one will be able to hear you!” The shadow’s master shouted.

“Who are you? Why did you catch me!” The mother asked, frightened.

“Even if I told you who I am, it doesn’t matter, since you will be dead soon anyways,” he replied.

“No, I beg you Sir! Let me go, I have a four-year-old daughter that I must look after. I beg you.” The mother kept pleading.

“I am really sorry, but I am hungry today.” Finishing his sentence, he bit into the mother’s neck and gulped down the mother’s life. Soon, the mother was getting her life sucked away quickly and reached the brink of death, but he didn’t bother to take back his fangs.

“Relax! I will take good care of your daughter.” He smiled crookedly while her eyes grew desperate.

“No. . .” A final sound came from the body with a breath filled with death, but vanished in a single step.

“Little girl, who are you waiting for?” He asked after arriving next to the slide.

“I am waiting for mama!” The little girl replied innocently.

“Your mama is waiting for you on the other side of the forest Here, let me take you there,” he said gently. No one would have guessed that he was a murderer.

“Really?” The little girl asked out of habit.

“Of course, let’s go. We don’t want to let your mother wait too long.” While talking, he held the little girl’s hand and walked towards the forest. However, I also got up from the bench and followed them inside.

“Mama, what happened to you? Quickly wake up! I am your baby, quickly wake up!” When the little girl saw her mother lying unconscious on the ground, she started to push her while weeping and wailing. However, she knew that her

mother would never wake up again.

“Stop yelling. I will send you to see your mama right now!” He said, his face ominous.

“Haven’t you eaten enough yet?” I asked as I silently followed behind them.

“I am full, so she is just a dessert.” After replying, he asked in surprise, “But wait, who are you?”

“Even if I told you who I am, it doesn’t matter since you will be dead soon anyways,” I coldly replied. Then, a dramatic scene took place. The vampire’s blood continued to flow into my body, and it was extremely delicious and unforgettable.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 19: Contract

I retracted my sharp, greedy teeth with some difficulty and lifted my head slowly. I tasted my lips with the tip of my tongue, looking at the owner in satisfaction. I could feel an unbridled fear emanating from his lips that had fallen open in shock, and a confusion that he had never experienced before.

“You, you, what... What are you?” He stammered.

“You have no need to know.” I answered coldly and landed softly on the stage after descending from the air. Now I was a full head shorter than him. Seeing that he had nothing more to say, I turned slowly and faced those who were beneath the stage.

“Luvian? Again?” Lisa asked dumbly, but this question seemed to be more of an emotional sigh. I ignored her and walked down slowly from the stage.

“Jing’er, your hair?” Sinmo asked and pointed at my head.

“Oh, it always seems to mysteriously grow longer.” I responded without a trace of surprise.

“That’s simply too amazing!” Sinmo sighed.

“There are even vampires in this world, what else is impossible?” I felt above it all.

“Where are you going?” The frozen owner on the stage called out when I’d reached the door.

“Home!” I answered simply.

“Why didn’t you kill me? Didn’t you want to get revenge for the child?” He could not understand why I hadn’t sucked his blood dry.

“Forget it, what good is it if you die?” Now I truly understood the meaning

behind ‘two wrongs don’t make a right.’

“Then, can you tell me who killed Louyu?” His tone no longer maintained his previous composure as he faced me.

“Sorry, I don’t want to talk about it.” I answered clearly again.

“Alright, then what can I do to get you to tell me the killer’s name?” He truly didn’t know what to do.

“Let me think.” I thought carefully and said. “Become my servant. The only thing I can promise is that, one day I will tell you what happened to Louyu.” Yes, that day would only come once. When my wounds no longer hurt and I no longer fear talking about the tragic events of the past. And he would have enough time to await that day’s arrival.

“Alright! I, Liuyu, swear in the name of blood that from this day forth, you are my master, and I am your servant.” He agreed without hesitation because he knew from what had just happened that it was impossible to get me to speak using force. Apart from agreeing to my terms, he would never know who killed Louyu.

“As my servant, the rules you must follow are:

Do not ask about my past.

Do not harm a single human.

You must do as I say with no exception.

You may not appear in front of me or someone I know without my summon.”

I delivered all my demands in one breath and turned to face him, waiting for his response.

“Yes, I can do all this.” He said quietly.

“Alright, now I want to go home. Now that I’ve taken your blood, I can summon you using the blood contract.” I responded one more time and turned to leave. It was getting late, and I had never returned home so late since getting a father.

“Surely you don’t want to walk back! I have a car, let me take you back!” On the side, Sinmo suddenly spoke up.

“Okay!” I responded after some thought. Thus, Sinmo and I left the Vampire Restaurant together, leaving an audience that had not recovered from its shock. We arrived at the parking lot behind the restaurant. There were many cars parked randomly within it.

“It looks like all vampires are quite rich!” I sighed with emotion.

“I’m the richest!” Sinmo grinned merrily.

“You’re not afraid of me?” I suddenly thought it a bit odd.

“Why should I be afraid of you?” Sinmo asked in return.

“I just fed off a vampire, don’t you think that’s frightening enough?” I really couldn’t completely make out Sinmo. It would seem that elder level figures were truly different.

“You’re already full, what else is there for me to fear. Not to mention, aren’t we friends? You wouldn’t attack a friend!” Sinmo listed a bunch of reasons not to fear me, but he didn’t mention the most important point, which was, in my heart, I have never really wished to harm anyone, whether it was a human or a ghost, unless he had committed an unforgivable act and I couldn’t bear it.

“Am I wrong?” Sinmo asked when he saw that I had no reaction.

“No, but you’re not correct either.” I said lightly.

“Is that so? You truly are a special person, I’ve thought so from the beginning. People often say that first impressions are the most accurate.” Sinmo talked as he drove.

“But, your hair is really strange. It grew so long within a second.” Sinmo turned his head to look at me.

“To be honest, I’m not sure why my hair grows so long.” I touched the hair that had suddenly grown so long that it brushed my ankles.

Truly! Why did it grow so long within the blink of an eye? The only thing I knew was that, whenever I loosened the silver ring, my hair would grow extremely long. But when I tightened the ring again, my hair would go back to its original shoulder length form.

I lightly recited a line and the silver ring locked onto my upper left arm again.

My hair naturally returned to its normal length.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 20: Father

“Left.”

“Right.” Silence meant keeping straight ahead. I gave simple directions to my home to Sinmo, and he followed them accordingly. It was calm trip between the two of us, with neither one of us saying anything until we neared my house.

“This place is really off the beaten path!” Sinmo expressed his opinion as he turned onto the only small path that led to my house.

“Because my house is the only one at the end of the road.” I explained.

“Looks like your family is rich too! Paving such a nice little road for convenience sake.” Sinmo laughed.

“This road was here before I moved in. This previous owner probably put it in.” I said lightly as I looked out the window. I’ve actually always liked this road, particularly the two rows of towering trees on its two sides. Their thick branches interwove in the air, as if they were embracing each other.

“Does it have a name?” Sinmo could always think of some special questions.

“Daddy named it Ancient Road.” I remembered that the first time daddy and I had walked down this path, daddy had suddenly wanted to give it a name. Daddy had said then that no matter what, people would only remember something if it had a name. Only then would the world remember it, no matter how strong the currents of time and history.

“Very appropriate!” Sinmo looked at the ancient trees and smiled at me.

“It actually has another name.” I said calmly. “The previous owner came up with it, I think it was Hidden Forest Road.”

“Oh, this name is interesting!” Sinmo kept muttering to himself after he’d

responded. "Hidden road, hidden road, a road that is hidden!"

"The daddy that you mention is your adopted father, right?" Sinmo suddenly changed the topic.

"Yes, I admitted."

"Is he human?" Sinmo kept asking.

"Yes." I also continued to respond.

"Does he have any other family?" Sinmo asked. He seemed to be very interested in my white collar father.

"It's just me now." I thought back to the first time I saw him. It was a truly bizarre night. I was devastated beyond belief, but resigned and without a plan. I was out of my mind and roamed the roads for the entire night. A small car came speeding by around dawn and I was rammed to the ground because I was unable to avoid it. When I woke again, I was lying on a white hospital bed, and the driver was watching over me.

I learned later that he was an orphan, and had grown up in the orphanage because no one had adopted him. He was self taught and found a nice job when he was 28. He met a gentle girl not long after he starting working, and formed a beautiful family after a few years. But all this changed a week before that day. His wife, who was four months pregnant, died in a car accident, and a day after his wife was buried, his wife's parents used the excuse that their daughter was no longer present to take back the house they had lived in, throwing him out.

Having salt rubbed in his wounds, he drove the little car, the only thing under his name, like a madman on that road. He wanted to drive to the end of the road, to the cliff, and just drive off of it. But his plans were ruined with my appearance. He had to take me to the hospital and he had to take care of me when I was in a coma for two days. Later on, he said that he would adopt me and that I was a gift from the heavens. He would continue living for me. I became his daughter just like that. His name was Lin Youcheng, and he changed my name to Lin Jing. Because he had no place to stay, he went with me to the ancient castle that I had bought with the 100 dollars that my parents had left me. This was also where we were currently headed.

“Thinking of the past?” Sinmo asked when he saw me emerge from my silence.

“Yes! The memories are still so clear even though it’s been two years already.” I sighed with emotion.

“Is this the ancient castle?” Sinmo suddenly pointed the clear image of my home off in the distance.

“Looks like we’ll be there soon.” I answered.

When we neared my house, I noticed that faint beams from a car’s lights came from the front yard. Its lights never cut out, and I wasn’t sure what was going on. If it was daddy’s car, then he would’ve parked as soon as he came back, and wouldn’t have left the car running in the front with the lights on.

“So it’s you guys!” I realized it was Xiaoyu’s car when our car was parked in front of the yard. I spoke to the three standing by their car when I got out of Sinmo’s car.

“Jing’er, why did you only just get back? And you’re still with him?” Xiaoyu questioned and pointed at me like he was a big brother.

“I don’t think I need your approval for when I return home!” I sternly riposited. This was the first time that I had given him so little face.

“I didn’t mean it that way!” Xiaoyu explained with a face full of embarrassment.

“Then what did you mean? I walked in front of him.

“I was a bit worried about you, so I went to the restaurant. But it was long after hours. I was still worried so I came to your place to see if you came back safely, but we’ve waited until now. We’ve been here an hour before you returned just now.” Xiaoyu gave a detailed account.

“I see. Yes, the restaurant closed earlier than usual today. I took Jing’er for a drive after we left and have only just returned, you have my apologies for making you so worried.” Sinmo rushed to get his explanation in. Xiaoyu and co’s facial expressions became unnatural as they looked at the cheerily smiling Sinmo. I suppose hunters and the hunted will always be ill at ease with each other!

“Since you’re fine, we’ll be on our way.” Xiaoyu said and then got back into the

car and prepared to leave, but Xuqing looked back with unwilling look on his face.

“Good bye!” I said lightly and watched as their red car drove off.

“I should go home as well!” Sinmo also left.

“Thank you for bringing me home!” I expressed my gratitude and watched him leave. I turned to walk through the front door. There weren’t any lights on at home, so daddy wasn’t home yet. Why is it that daddy always came home quite late these days, was work that busy?

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 21: Sister

Under the moonlight, a small car flew past on the silver road, leaving a streak of white light in the air.

It eventually halted below a shabby, small two-story building. Three young men exited the car. One of them gently knocked on the door, which had weird symbols drawn on it. The door opened to reveal a person standing behind the ajar door. Under the dim lights, the only distinguishable thing about the person was that she was a girl, but her age was unknown. The three young men then entered, and the door was closed.

“Zhile, I haven’t seen you for days. Did you grow taller?” Xuxing asked while ascending the stairs, as he stretched out his hand to touch the head of the girl beside him.

“Yeah!” The girl answered happily.

“That’s great!” Xuxing laughed, and continued saying, “You must grow up quickly!”

“Why?” The girl asked perplexedly.

“If you don’t grow up any sooner, your brother Xiaoyu will be taken by someone else!” Xuxing continued laughing and even averted his head to look at Xiaoyu, who was thinking about something.

“Big Brother Xu, what nonsense are you saying?” The girl’s face turned red as she naturally lowered her head while Xiaoyu had no reaction at all.

“I am not talking nonsense. These days, your brother Xiaoyu has been chasing a girl all day and night!” Arriving on the second level, Xuxing chose a comfortable spot on the sofa and sat down, while Xuqing sat down in the corner. This was his special seat, and Xuxing had given it a funny name, ‘Throne’. As for Xiaoyu, he

simply sat down wordlessly.

“What girl?” Zhile sat beside Xuxing and asked anxiously.

“Now you are anxious!” Xuxing then purposely stopped talking.

“Big Brother Xuxing, quickly tell me! I will cook delicious food for you, okay?” Zhile knew that Xuxing loved to eat the dessert that she made, and so she decided to use it to tempt him.

“Sure, but I am afraid that Xiaoyu will get mad at me if I tell you,” Xuxing said, while glancing at Xiaoyu.

“It’s alright. He seems to be pondering about something! He has always been very focused when he is thinking, so he won’t hear your words. Don’t worry.” Whether it’s interest, hobbies, or emotions, Zhile had always known Xiaoyu very well.

“Alright. Seeing that you are so pitiful, I will reveal a bit,” Xuxing said as he faced Zhile, while Zhile stretched her neck and waited.

“The girl is a classmate of Xiaoyu’s sister, and she is called Linjing now.” Xuxing talked excitedly.

“That’s it?” Zhile was very unsatisfied.

“Well, what else do you want to know?” Xuxing asked.

“How old is she and what is her character like? Also, what does she look like?” As she was asking, Zhile felt embarrassed and lowered her head.

“She seemed to be a year older than Xiaoya, so she should be seventeen years old! As for her character? She is indifferent to everything and talks contemplatively like an elder. As for her appearance, I need to think carefully about this!” Xuxing continued answering as he recalled her appearance. “She has black long hair that falls to her shoulders and a pretty face. Yet, a transparent frost always seems to enshroud her. You can say that she is cold and beautiful. One more thing; she has a noble temperament that looks down upon everything.”

“She’s that attractive?” After listening to Xuxing’s description, Zhile lowered her head even further, and no one knew what she was thinking.

“Don’t give up that quickly! She seemed to have no feelings for your brother Xiaoyu. If you behave well, we will definitely do our best to help you,” Xuxing said confidently. He even glanced at Xiaoyu after he spoke, but Xiaoyu kept wiping the silver dagger and paid no attention to him.

“Really?” Zhile instantly lifted her head with an excited expression on her face. Zhile had always been saying that she would marry Brother Xiaoyu, be his wife, and take care of him for all her life!

“Xuxing, have you said enough?” Xiaoyu suddenly shouted while looking very displeased.

“Alright, alright. I will stop, okay? I knew you would get mad.” Xuxing made a face and answered.

“Brother Xiaoyu, are you done thinking? I will go make tea for you guys.” Being tactful, Zhile left the room.

“That little girl is becoming more and more sensible. Now, she’s very different from when she arrived. At that time, she only knew how to cry.” Xuxing recalled Zhile’s appearance when she had first come. Zhile had been an orphan who had wandered in the fields by herself. When Xiaoyu found her, he took her here and gave her shelter. From that time onwards, the little girl had been saying that she would marry Xiaoyu to repay his kindness.

“She is a good girl.” Xiaoyu also agreed with Xuxing’s opinion.

“So does that mean you have some feelings for her?” Xuxing immediately seized the chance and asked.

“Don’t speak nonsense. I have always seen her as my little sister,” Xiaoyu scolded.

“You also said that you saw that Jing’er as a sister, but anyone with eyes could see that it’s not like that at all,” Xuxing expostulated.

“Alright, stop talking about it. I do admit I have a weird feeling towards Jing’er, but I am not quite sure what that feeling is,” Xiaoyu admitted.

“You have finally admitted it. However, the little girl will be sad now.” Xuxing sighed as he made this emotional remark.

“Why did we let that vampire go?” Xuqing suddenly blurted out.

“He didn’t hurt anyone, so killing him wasn’t necessary!” Xuxing was the first to answer.

“We can only kill the vampire when it is hurting someone?” Xuqing inquired puzzlingly.

“That’s right,” Xiaoyu explained. “We hunters made this agreement with the vampires.”

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 22: Agreement

“Agreement? Was there really such an agreement?” Xuxing was always the one who opened his mouth first.

“There is, but it is a very ancient agreement!” Xiaoyu calmly replied.

“What kind of agreement?” Xuqing asked seriously.

“The content of this agreement is very simple, and only has a few words: Only when a vampire has hurt someone, are the hunters allowed to kill it. In return, the other vampires are not allowed to retaliate against the hunters in such a case.” Xiaoyu remembered that his father had told him about it when he was still young. However, at that time, he didn’t care about anything except playing, and that had only changed after his father was gone. When his father was dying in his bed, he pulled Xiaoyu, who was next to him, over and repeatedly urged over and over again, “No matter what, you absolutely mustn’t betray this agreement; otherwise you will bring a disaster upon us.” These were his father’s last words.

“Who told you that?” Xuxing took out a little book and was planning to write it down.

“My father.” Xiaoyu proudly said.

“Then, between who was this agreement?” Xuxing wanted to clarify all the details, as this was his character.

“My father didn’t talk about it, but I saw being mentioned in the notepads that my father left behind. However, it was not very detailed, and only mentioned this: the original vampires were very small in population, and although each one was very powerful, they rarely lived together. So the hunters gathered together

and intended to wipe out the vampires one by one. However, in order to fight back the hunters, the vampires also started to unite and retaliate. As a result, the two sides wounded each other badly. And during that time, there was a very powerful hunter, whom was was a vampire, but also a human born king. He never killed any vampires, nor did he harm any humans, and therefore had a very good reputation on both sides. Since he didn't want to be left without more work, he acted as a middleman and proposed a convention, which was the agreement we just talked about." Xiaoyu clearly remembered everything that was written inside the book.

"We don't even have the name of that guy!" said Xuxing somewhat disappointed.

"It's already pretty good that we know about this. Perhaps, people won't even know about this agreement after a few generations." Xiaoyu smiled a bit helplessly.

"Rest assured, as long it's in my book, some people will definitely know about it." Xuxing said while waving the small book in his hand

"Can your book withstand the decay of time?!" Xiaoyu didn't have any hope for it at all.

"Don't look down on my book. Although this book is small, the quality is not bad at all! Each page is made of leather, and as long as I write with my specially-made carbon pen, even if it falls into water, it won't fade even after a hundred years!" Xuxing always took good care of his precious things.

"If you throw it into the fire, let alone the words, even the book will be gone." Xiaoyu shook his head while talking about the facts. Every book's fate was the same – the same as the one his father left behind – in the end, they all turned into ashes in the fire.

"Xiaoyu, you don't need to take your revenge on me! Wasn't I only joking with your latest love fling?" Xuxing said while putting on an innocent face.

"Don't bother with this acting." Xiaoyu immediately interrupted Xuxing's banter.

"Do you guys really want to comply with this agreement?" Xuqing rarely

talked, but each word he said made people start thinking.

“Yes, I will.” Xiaoyu remembered his father’s serious look, and he assured , with those eyes looking down on him in his mind, that he would keep this agreement.

“I think this agreement makes sense, so I will also comply with it.” Xuxing also decided.

“However, I am not sure if I should follow this agreement. After all, this agreement was not made by me and them, so I don’t need to comply.” Xuqing’s face was full of killing intent. Even though he usually had the appearance of a killer, whenever someone mentioned vampires, his murderous intent instantly doubled and began to overflow.

“Although I don’t have the authority to request you to do so, as your best friend and companion, I must remind you that it is better to comply with this agreement. Just before my father’s death, he said that the people who doesn’t follow this agreement with only bring disaster upon themselves.”Xiaoyu looked at Xuqing with a serious face.

“It’s better if you comply with it anyway, since following this agreement won’t do us any harm.” Xuxing’s thinking was very rational.

“Really?” Xuqing said softly and didn’t say anything afterwards, while he continued cleaning his short sword.

“What is it that we must agree to?” Zhile come from downstairs while carrying a pot of tea.

“Nothing, this is not related to you.” Xuxing answered.

“Ah yes, this only concerns us. You don’t have to worry about it.” Xiaoyu also agreed. It was obvious that they didn’t want to involve this cute poor girl with these dangerous things. They all knew very well that being a huntress wasn’t a good fate.

“Oh, then I won’t ask.” Zhile obediently pour out the tea for everyone.

“However, there is a thing that has always bothered me.” Xuxing said after taking a sip.

“What?” Xiaoyu asked. Normally the questioning and answering was only between the two of them, and Xuqing would rarely join in. Zhile normally stood obediently beside them, pouring them tea, and quietly listening to them. She rarely expressed her own opinion.

“What did the investigation find out about what happened to that girl before?” Xuxing asked.

“The only thing I know is that she had a pitiful past.” Xiaoyu sadly replied.

“It is that girl called Jing’er?” Zhile suddenly asked.

“Yes, there were always some vampires near her, but they never harmed her. It was very strange!” Xuxing said.

“Could she also be a vampire?!” Zhile shouted out.

“No, Jing’er is definitely not a vampire.” Xiaoyu also shouted. Everyone who was drinking next to him was scared by this suddenness and didn’t know how to reply.

“I’m sorry.” After Xiaoyu apologized, he continued, “however, although his parents’ death were related to the vampires, her boyfriend was also killed by a vampire. Having vampires appearing close to her wasn’t her fault. She is already very pitiful, and now you actually claim that she herself is a vampire. This is too unjust towards her. Alright, let’s stop here for today. I have to go home or Xiaoya will be worried!” After talking, Xiaoyu went downstairs to go home.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 23: Loneliness

I pushed open the door and walked into the living room. It was pitch-black inside, and dead silent. A familiar feeling came over me, but I couldn't contemplate what the feeling was as I stretched my hand to turn on the large chandelier in the living room. Everything became bright. At that moment, my first realization was that Daddy really hadn't returned!

After today, I knew so many things. For a moment, it gave me an extremely tired feeling. Hence, I didn't stay in the living room. Dragging my weary body and soul, I walked up the stairs and decided to get a good rest. I went to my own room and took out a pair of pajamas as I headed into the bathroom. Some people said that water possessed the most spirituality, therefore placing my body into the water would be the best way to rest.

When I lay in the water, I thought I would feel extremely comfortable, almost like I would've in the past, but it was different today. The sound of the water flowing on my skin was so clear that I was unable to relax and get a good rest. And so, I could only wash myself and got out of the water. The moment I stood before the mirror, the two circles on my left arm flashed a brilliant radiance. I put on my pajamas and helplessly walked out of the bathroom. What should I do now? I pondered as I laid on the bed. Sleep? However, Daddy hadn't returned and I felt very worried. This way, I absolutely couldn't fall asleep. Nevermind. I'll just wander around upstairs, or go downstairs and sit in the living room. Maybe Daddy will be back later, so it wouldn't be too late if I sleep when he returns. I made up my mind; I then wore the white cloak that was placed on my bed this morning and headed out of the room. Everything in the ancient castle was eerily silent as the soft sounds of my footsteps resounded continually in the living room.

I went around the winding corridor on the second floor, and slowly walked

step-by-step past each room and door. Yet, I had no urge to push open the door to head into the room. I simply allowed them to pass by me. Maybe I was scared, because each door was connected to another world. The moment you opened it, you would have no choice but to face every possibility, whether it's good or bad, whether it was familiar or not, while the thing I feared the most was— — loneliness.

And when I stepped into the living just now, the feeling that washed over me was loneliness. The loneliness which I hadn't felt for two years. Today, I suddenly felt the sentiment of being by myself again. As I was thinking, I found myself at the door of the room that belonged to my parents in the past. A layer of thick cobwebs was on the door, but it still gave me a sense of familiarity. Although it wasn't locked, I couldn't muster courage to open it. In my mind, I recalled distinctly everything inside the room. Everything was the same as it used to be; a bed, two tables and a few chairs. All these things must be covered by dust. However, I was still afraid of seeing this shocking feeling with my own eyes. Therefore, I averted and dashed downstairs. This was escaping!

After I went downstairs, I went to the kitchen to make a cup of red tea, and sat down on the sofa in the living room. The feeling of tasting tea alone would never be better than with two people drinking it together. I took a sip of the tea and my casual sight suddenly stopped on a low cabinet beside the sofa. I'm not quite sure how many years this low cabinet has been placed here. I only knew that a checkerboard and some pieces were placed on top of the low cabinet a very long time ago. They were the battlefield used for me and my daddy in the past to compete with each other when we were bored, while the daddy now would put some newspapers on top of the low cabinet. Yet, nothing is on the low cabinet now. I don't know if the cabinet is feeling lonely and is afraid of loneliness like me.

I'm being so weird today. When do I feel lonely with everything that I see. The me in the past would never pay attention to these things. In the past, I would return to my room to do homework after I came home from school, and eat dinner with daddy when it was dinner time. After dinner, I would help daddy wash the dishes and wipe the tables. After everything was done, I would sit here with daddy, and enjoy tea and chat with him, or I might read the newspaper.

However, why is it just me alone today? Why isn't daddy back?

I moved my eyes away, refusing to look at that cabinet which seems to make people feel lonely. However, I then accidentally saw the corner of the wall opposite me. That was the place that I was the most familiar of, because I stayed there for one thousand days, and one thousand nights.

I remember the time when my parents just passed away, I was alone. Me, who never went outside, felt even more afraid of leaving the castle. I was afraid of everything outside that door, regardless of whether it was harmful or not. Plus, I didn't know anyone at that time, therefore I would have no place to go even if I went out of the door. Thus, I felt afraid and curled up in that corner. Because only when my back leaned upon that icy cold wall, did I feel like I had something to depend on. That icy feeling was still so clear, once I tried to recall it. That corner seemed to be summoning me. As I kept staring at it, the urge to curl up in that corner grew stronger. I took a sip of my tea and calmed myself. However, I still stood up and walked to that corner.

I hugged my knees, curled up, and leaned against the corner as I lay down. Closing my eyes quietly, my back felt the coldness which came from the wall. This must be the temperature of loneliness -The temperature was as cold as the icy snow!

Now I felt it distinctly again; loneliness was a very weird feeling.

When you couldn't hear a sound from the surrounding, the thing you felt was loneliness.

When there were noises around you, but the noises had nothing to do with you, the thing you felt was also loneliness.

Anyway, I really don't like this feeling.

Daddy! Why aren't you back? Why did you leave me here by myself, so alone and afraid?

As I lay there, I asked myself these questions in my heart again and again, but none of the voices could answer my questions. I could only lay down quietly at the corner of the wall as I waited for someone to answer, for daddy to return, for someone to pull me up from the cold corner and for someone to drive away the

loneliness and fear from my life. But would someone really do it? Would someone really know that there's me, a pitiful person, who was waiting?

No, never. Since the past, a long time ago until now, I was still lying here. Does that mean the icy cold corner is the place I should be at?

No, no way. Mommy said, "You are still too young. There will be happy times in the future, therefore you just have to wait silently for the arrival of that day."

Mommy, did you hear? I am waiting. I have always been waiting. Because I promised you, therefore I will keep my promise. I will keep waiting until my happiness arrives.

However my body is so cold now, really, very cold, while my surroundings are so quiet. There is no one and no sound.

My consciousness gradually became blurry. I don't know how much time has passed, or whether I'm awake or asleep. Everything seems to have stopped, as I just don't feel anything anymore.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 24: Warmth (Part I)

“Mommy, you’re home!” I raised my head and saw that mom had come home from work.

“Yes indeed, did you guys have fun today?” Mommy asked with a smile.

“Daddy cheated, he always eats my pieces without me knowing!” I pouted and complained.

“Oh, so daddy always wins at Chinese chess!” Mommy smiled.

“Where is daddy now?”

“Daddy is writing stuff in the room!” I said with a face full of childishness and kept moving the pieces. I kept thinking, why was daddy’s pieces always a step ahead of mine?

“Come Luvian, give this bottle of blood to daddy. Daddy must be thirsty.” Mommy brought out a thermos from her bag and handed it over.

“Okay!” I grabbed the bottle and rushed upstairs.

“Daddy! Daddy! Hurry and drink, mommy brought blood back.” I yelled as I barrelled through the door of my parents’ room.

“Come, baby.” Daddy turned around and grabbed me in a hug, putting me on his legs. I smiled as I handed the bottle over, looking into daddy’s eyes. His black eyes were filled with fatherly love. That kind of love had a color to it — the color of night. Therefore I liked night, the colors of the night, and the love that accompanied nightfall.

“Thank you baby.” Daddy smiled as he raised the bottle in his hand and started drinking.

Watching daddy drink blood reminded me of that night half a year ago. The

night was just as dark, with an occasional startled bird in flight disturbing the peace it should've had.

"Luvian, we're home." I was too lazy to walk and had hitched a ride on daddy's back. He pushed open the garden gate.

"You lazy bug, come on down! Daddy must be tired!" Mommy said with a laugh behind me.

"No, I'm not tired. How could I be tired with our baby on my back!" Daddy said hurriedly. And just like that, our family of three walked in talking and laughing. I didn't come down from daddy's back until we reached the main hall, and went to do the homework that teacher had assigned today.

"Dear, I'm going to make dinner. Rest for a bit and we'll have a big meal later to celebrate our baby jumping into third grade." Mommy said as she carried a large bag of vegetables into the kitchen.

"I'll wait for dinner then." Daddy followed me up the stairs, as if he was going to rest for a little while in the room.

Everything was so natural, so harmonious and warm. We were the most perfect and happiest family in anyone's eyes.

"Ah! Let go of me! Who are you? Let go of me, you're hurting me! Daddy! Mommy!" The sudden ambush that hit me as I walked through my room door made me scream involuntarily. I only remember struggling fiercely, and the unending pain that followed. It was that pair of hands that brought me endless pain and drew back the curtains of my tragic fate.

The first person to appear in front of me after hearing my screams was daddy. When daddy saw the person holding me, the fear on his face was as if he had seen an alien. That was the only simile I could think of in that moment. But daddy quickly overcame his shock and asked, "Who are you? What do you want? Release my baby."

To be honest, that was the first time I've heard daddy speak in that kind of tone. Calm, grave, and a kind of tone that commanded the other person's obedience like he was the commander of thousands of troops and horses.

"Who do you think you are trying to order me around? Why don't you live to

three hundred first!" It was a mocking tone. Although I couldn't see his face, I could imagine it was an insufferably arrogant face.

"Release her. Take me instead. I think you want more right now!" Daddy still had traces of authority in his voice.

"Alright!" The person behind me had already hurtled in front of daddy before I could react. The next thing that happened greatly impacted my entire perspective on life.

The person opened his bloodthirsty mouth, revealing a pair of sharp teeth, and bit down onto daddy's neck. But in the blink of an eye, daddy had also grabbed that arm and bitten down sharply. In that moment, not only I, but also mommy (who had appeared at some point in time) froze in our places like dummies. But we weren't the ones who were most surprised. Rather, it was the person who had attacked us. He released my daddy's neck in astonishment, allowing daddy to continue feeding on him.

When daddy let go of his arm, that man, or creature, had long since gone. Only daddy was left sitting on the floor, curled up in extreme agony, frightening howls emitting from his mouth. Mommy sat helplessly at the door, her face full of sorrow.

I could watch no longer. I ran up to hug daddy and cried out, "Daddy! Daddy! What's wrong with you?" But daddy pushed me away and gave himself over to the pain. Mommy walked over to hug me and kept comforting me. I no longer remember what she said, but it was probably something that went along the lines of, "Don't be afraid, nothing's going to happen, everything will be fine." Stuff like that.

It was just as mommy said, everything was "fine". Daddy regained his vigor the very next day, and no traces of last night's pain could be found on his face. Except that he never set foot outside the house from that day forth, and I left school after that day. I left my classmates, my teacher, the environment of a normal child. I stayed at home, like I do now, playing Chinese chess with daddy and relieving him of his boredom.

Even though it wasn't like before, but our family now led a peaceful, quiet life and was still happy.

I wanted to lie closely in daddy's embrace. Even though daddy didn't give me warmth like he did before that day, I still liked to lie in his arms. It was only there that I felt safe and unalone.

Blood Hourglass

Chapter 25: Warmth (Part II)

“Baby, what are you think about?” Daddy put the thermos in his hand down and looked at me.

“Nothing, I’m not thinking of anything!” I denied because I knew the pain from the events of that day still plagued daddy. Perhaps they would never disappear.

“Your quickly-darting eyes tell me that you haven’t spoken the truth.” Daddy lightly pinched my face.

“Alright, I’ll tell you okay?” I rubbed my cheek and said with resignation. “I was thinking about what I should do so that I can eat all of daddy’s pieces.”

“You don’t need to think about that, you can’t do it yet.” Daddy smiled.

“Why, why can’t I do it yet?” I refused to quit and kept up with the questions.

“There are many reasons, such as: you’re too young, your skill at Chinese chess isn’t there yet, you know nothing of strategy, etc.” Daddy came up with a ton of reasons in one breath, as if there really wasn’t the slightest chance of me beating him at the moment.

“I’m not young anymore! And I’ve been learning Chinese chess for six months now!” I completely disagreed with the last two points that daddy made.

“But you’ll always be daddy’s baby!” Daddy hugged me with both hands. True! Although I was eight now, but I would always be a child to daddy. And I’ve only played Chinese chess for half a year. According to daddy, this amount of time was nothing for chess players. I had merely just started.

“But daddy, what’s strategy?” I asked naively. It seemed like daddy was right, it would be a while before I could beat him!

“Strategy? This is a bit difficult to explain. It’s too complicated. You wouldn’t

understand either.” Daddy found himself put in a spot.

“Then explain it in an easier way so that I can understand!” I insisted.

“The easy way to explain it is that someone already made plans in advance to achieve some goal, or some sort of means.” Daddy had to explain.

“Just like how I need to wear a pair of gloves when I pick roses?” I asked seriously.

“Wearing gloves is a means to an end. When playing chess, both sides will set some plans in motion and try their best to take the other side’s pieces in order to win. Of course, the most important thing is to take the other person’s general. This way, you win. It’s just like fighting a war – you win if you take out all of the other side’s soldiers. But if possible, kill the other side’s general first. This way, the other army will fall into disarray and you will win. You may even win faster.” Daddy taught me patiently.

“Then daddy, how should I set up my plans so that I can take your general?” I asked directly.

“Hahaha!” Daddy laughed loudly.

“Daddy stop laughing, tell me?” I pouted.

“What’s so funny?” Mommy walked into the room at this moment.

“Baby is too cute!” Daddy continued to chuckle.

“It took you this long to discover that!” Mommy walked up and reached out her hands for a hug.

“Come, baby let’s go take a bath and have dinner downstairs afterwards.” Mommy said as she brought me to the bathroom. The tub had already been filled with water. Mommy took my clothes off for me and placed me in the water. The water was warm and comfortable.

“Dear, I’m going to serve the rice first, I’ll wait for you!” Daddy shouted outside the bathroom door.

“Okay!” Mommy replied as she washed me.

“Mommy, do you know how to set up a plan so that I can take daddy’s

general?" I asked as I played with the water.

"Oh? Still thinking about chess?" Mommy smiled.

"Yes, I've got to win. Daddy says there is no way I can beat him now." I pouted with my small mouth.

"Is that so? Daddy thinks so little of our baby!" Mommy was ever so gentle. I don't think I've ever seen her lose her temper in my memories. She has always had that tender face and that tender tone.

"Mommy, don't be so perfunctory!" To think such a profound word existed in my small mind.

"Baby even knows perfunctory! So smart!" Mommy often complimented me in such a gentle way.

"Okay, we're done. Come on out, take the towel off and put your clothes on. Let's go downstairs before daddy falls asleep." Mommy said as she wiped me dry and helped me into my clothes.

Mommy was right, daddy had already served the food when we went downstairs. The plates were laid out nicely on the table, and he was nearly falling asleep on the couch nearby. I thought it was a prime opportunity and motioned for mommy to not make a sound. I crept soundlessly next to daddy, intending to scare him.

"Ah!!!" But just as I was about to scare him, he suddenly opened his eyes and pulled me into a hug, frightening a scream out of me instead.

"It'll be a long time before baby can scare daddy!" Daddy smiled and didn't let go.

"I hate it when daddy says that." I complained when I calmed down.

"Alright, stop playing, there is homework to be done after dinner!" Mommy stopped our play. I hadn't attended a day of school since that day, but mommy and daddy didn't want me to give up on my schoolwork. They decided to establish a classroom at home. After all, daddy was a teacher to begin with, and he was placed in charge of my education.

"Alright, let's eat first." Daddy said as he let go of me.

“Yes, teacher!” I called daddy that sometimes since he was my chess opponent and my teacher! At the end of the day, this was a small comedy that occurred before we had dinner. This was the case everyday and we never got tired of it.